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HARVARD
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HUSBANDRY SPIRITUALIZED;

OR THE

HEAVENLY USE

OF

EARTHLY THINGS,

IN WHICH HUSBANDMEN ARE DIRECTED TO AN EXCELLENT IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR COMMON EMPLOYMENTS.

Whereunto are added,

OCCASIONAL MEDITATIONS

UPON

BIRDS, BEASTS, TREES, FLOWERS, &c.

Also,

The Touchstone of Sincerity.

AND

EXTRACTS FROM A TOKEN FOR MOURNERS.

BY REV. JOHN FLAVEL,
Late Minister at Dartmouth, in Devon.

MIDDLETOWN:
PUBLISHED BY J. A. BOSWELL.
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THE

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

TO THE WORSHIPFUL ROBERT SAVERY, AND WILLIAM SAVERY, OF SLADE, ESQUIRES.

HONORED FRIENDS,

IT hath been long since observed, that the world, below, is a glass to discover the world above; *Seculum est speculum:* and although I am not of their opinion, that say, the heathens may spell Christ out of the sun, moon, and stars; yet this I know, that the irrational and inanimate, as well as rational creatures, have a language; and though not by articulate speech, yet, in a metaphorical sense, they preach unto man the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, Rom. i. 20. *There is* (saith the Psalmist, Psalm xix. 3.) *no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard.*— Or (as Junius renders it) there is no speech, nor words, yet without these, their voice is understood, and their line, (*i. e.* saith Diodate) their writing in gross, and plain draughts, *is* gone out through all the earth.

As man is compounded of a fleshly and spiritual substance, so God hath endowed the creatures with a spiritual, as well as fleshly usefulness; they have not only a natural use in alimental and physical respects, but also a spiritual use, as they bear the figures and similitudes of many sublime and heavenly mysteries. Believe me (saith contemplative Bernard) thou shalt find more in the woods, than in a corner; stones and trees will teach thee what thou shalt not hear from learned doctors. By a skilful

and industrious improvement of the creature (saith M Baxter excellently) we might have a fuller taste of Chr and heaven, in every bit of bread that we eat, and every draught of beer that we drink, than most men ha in the use of the sacrament.

And as the creatures teach divine and excellent thin so they teach them in a perspicuous and taking manne *Duo illa nos maxime movent, similitudo et exemplum*, sa the orator.* These two things, similitude and examp do especially move us. Notions are more easily conve ed to the understanding, by being first cloathed in so apt similitude, and so represented to the sense. A therefore Jesus Christ, the great Prophet, delighted mu in teaching by parables, and the prophets were much this way also, Hos. xii. 10. *I have used similitudes by t ministry of the prophets.* Those that can retain little a sermon, yet ordinarily retain an apt similitude.

I confess it is an humbling consideration, that man, wh at first was led by the knowledge of God, to the know edge of the creature, must now, by the creatures, lea to know God. That the creatures, (as one saith) lik Balaam's ass, should teach their master. But though th be the unhappiness of poor man in his collapsed state, y it is now his wisdom to improve such helps; and whil others, by the abuse of the creatures, are furthering the perdition, to be, by the spiritual improvement of thes promoting our own salvation.

It is an excellent art to discourse with birds, beast and fishes, about sublime and spiritual subjects, and mak them answer to your questions; and this may be don Job xii. 7, 8. *Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach the*

* Cicero.

and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; *or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.* That is, (saith Mr. Caryl*) the creatures teach us when we think of them: 'They teach us, though not formally, yet virtually; they answer and resolve the question put to them, though not explicitly to the ear, yet convincingly to the conscience. So then, we ask the creatures, when we diligently consider them, when we search out the perfections and virtues that God hath put into, or stampt upon them. To set our mind thus upon the creature, is to discourse with the creature; the *questions which man asks of a beast*, are only his own meditations. Again, the creatures teach us; when we in meditation, make our collections, and draw down a demonstration of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in making them, or the frailty of man in needing them; such conclusions and inferences are the teachings of the creatures.'

Common objects (saith another†) may be improved two ways; viz. In an argumentative, and in a representative way; by reasoning from them, and by viewing the resemblance that is betwixt them and spiritual matters.

First, In meditation argue thus, as in the present case and *similitude of the apostle*. If an husbandman, upon the ordinary principles of reason, can wait for the harvest, shall not I wait for the coming of the Lord? The day of refreshing; the corn is precious to him, and so is the coming of Christ to me. Shall he be so patient, and endure so much for a little corn; and not I for the kingdom of heaven? He is willing to stay till all causes have had their operations, till he hath received the former and

* Caryl in loc. † Dr. Manton.

the latter rain; and shall not I, till the Divine decrees be accomplished?

Secondly, In meditation make the resemblance, and discourse thus within yourselves: This is my seed-time, heaven is my harvest; here I must labor and toil, and there rest. I see the husbandman's life is a great toil: no excellent thing can be obtained without labor, and an obstinate patience. I see the seed must be hidden in the furrows, rotten and corrupted, e're it can spring forth with any increase. Our hopes are hidden, light is sown for the righteous; all our comforts are buried under the clods, and after all this there must be long *waiting*, we cannot sow and reap in a day; effects cannot follow, till all necessary causes have first wrought. It is not in the power of husbandmen to ripen fruits at pleasure, our times are in the hands of God, therefore it is good to wait; a long-suffering patience will reap the desired fruit. Thus you have some hints of this heavenly art of improving the creatures.

Navigation Spiritualized.

The motives inducing me to this undertaking, were the Lord's owning, with some success, my labors of a like nature, together with the desire and inclination (stirred up in me, I hope, by the Spirit of the Lord, to devote my vacant hours to his service in this kind.) I considered, that if the Pharisees, in a blind zeal to a faction, could compass sea and land to proselyte men to their party, though thereby they made them sevenfold more the children of the Devil than before; how much more was I obliged, by true love to God, and zeal to the everlasting happiness of souls, to use my uttermost endeavors, both with *seamen* and *husbandmen*, to win them to Christ, and thereby make them more than seventy-seven fold happier

than before? Not to mention other encouragements to this work, which I received from the earnest desires of some reverend and worthy brethren inviting thereunto; all which I hope the event will manifest to be a call from God to this work.

I confess I met with some discouragement in my first attempt, from my unacquaintedness with rural affairs; and because I was to travel in a path (to me) untrodden; but having once engaged in it, those discouragements were soon overcome: and being now brought to what you here see, I offer to your hands these first-fruits of my spare hours.

I presume you will account it no disparagement, that I dedicate a book of husbandry to gentlemen of your quality. This is *spiritual husbandry*, which here is taught you; and yet I tell you, that great persons have accounted that civil employment (which is much inferior to this) no disparagement to them. *The king himself is served by the field.* Eccles. v. 9. Or, as Montanus renders the Hebrew text, *Rex agro fit servus;* The king himself is a servant to the field. And of king Uzziah it is written, 2 Chron. xxvi. 10. *That he loved husbandry.* And Amos vii. 1. we read of the king's *mowings.* Yea, Pliny hath observed, that corn was never so plentiful at Rome, as when the same men tilled the land that ruled the *commonwealth. Quasi gauderet terra laureato vomere scilicet et aratore triumphali;* as though the earth itself rejoiced in the laurelled ploughshare, and the triumphant ploughman.

What pleasure you will find in reading it, I know not; but to me it hath been a pleasant path, from first to last; who yet have been at far greater expense of time and pains in compiling it, than you can be in reading it. The husbandman's work, you know, is no easy work, and the

spiritualizing of it hath greater difficulties attending it; but yet the pleasure hath abundantly recompensed the pains. I have found the observation of Erasmus experimentally true; *Qui litteris addicti sumus, animi lassitudinem a studiis gravioribus contractum; ab iisdem studiis, sed amoenioribus recreamus:* Those that are addicted to study, (saith he,) when they have wearied their spirits with study, can recreate them again with study, by making a diversion from that which is severe and knotty, to some more facile and pleasant subject.

But to hear that God hath used and honored these papers to the good of any soul, will yield me the highest content and satisfaction imaginable.

May you but learn that lesson, which is the general scope and design of this book, viz. How to walk with God from day to day, and make the several objects you behold, *scalae et alae*, wings and ladders to mount your souls nearer to him, who is the centre of all blessed spirits. How much will it comfort me, and confirm my hope, that it was the call of God indeed, which put me upon these endeavors!

O Sirs! What an excellent thing would it be for you, to make such holy improvements of all these earthly objects which daily occur to your senses, and cause them to proclaim and preach to you divine and heavenly mysteries; whilst others make them groan, by abusing them to sin, and subjecting them to their lusts. A man may be cast into such a condition, wherein he cannot enjoy the blessing and benefit of a pious and powerful ministry; but you cannot, ordinarily, fall into such a condition, wherein any thing, excepting a bad heart, can deprive you of the benefits and comforts of those excellent sermons and divinity lectures, which the creatures here offer to preach and read to you.

Content not yourselves, I beseech you, with that natural sweetness the creatures afford; for thereof the beasts are capable, as much, if not more, than you; but use them to those spiritual ends you are here directed, and they will yield you a sweetness far transcending that natural sweetness you ever relished in them; and indeed, you never use the creatures as their *Lord's*, till you come to see *your Lord*, in and by them. I confess the discoveries of God in the word are far more excellent, clear, and powerful; *He hath magnified his word above all his name.* And therein are the unsearchable *riches of Christ*, or rich discoveries of that grace that hath no footsteps in nature, as the apostle's expression signifies, Ephes. iii. 8.

And if that which might be known of God by the creatures, leave men without excuse; as it is manifest, Rom. i. 20. How inexcusable then will those be, who have received not only the teachings of the creature, but also the grace of the gospel in vain! *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* They that are careless in the day of grace, shall be speechless in the day of judgment.

I am sensible of many defects in these papers, as well as in myself; they have doubtless a taste of the distractions of the times wherein they were written; nor was I willing to keep them so long underhand, as the accurateness and exactness with which such a subject ought to be handled, did require. Had I designed my own credit, I should have observed that counsel, *Nonumque prematur in annum*, i. e. To have kept it much longer under the file, before I had exposed it to public view; but I rather inclined to Solomon's counsel, *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest*, Eccles. ix. 10.

I apprehend a necessity of some such means to be used, for the instruction and conviction of country people; who either are not capable of understanding truth in another dialect, or at least are less affected with it. The proposition in every chapter consists of an observation in husbandry; wherein, if I have failed in using any improper expression, your candor will cover it, and impute it to my unacquaintedness in rural affairs:——*In magnis voluisse sat est.*

The reddition or application, you will find, I hope, both pertinent and close. The reflections serious, and such, as I hope, your consciences will faithfully improve.

I shall add no more, but to beg that God, who instructeth the husbandman in his civil calling, to teach him wisdom spiritually to improve it; and, particularly, that you may reap a crop of much spiritual benefit, from that seed which is here sown by the hand of the Lord's unprofitable servant, and, in him,

Your very affectionate
Friend and servant,
JOHN FLAVEL.

TO THE

CHRISTIAN READER.

THERE are three things wherein, as it hath been said, long before my day, the exercise of godliness doth chiefly consist: Prayer, temptation, meditation: Meditation is the subject of the following manual. The object of meditation is twofold. First—The word. Secondly—The

works of God. The works of God are twofold. First—Internal. Secondly—external. The external works of God are twofold. First—of creation. Secondly—of providence. The works of providence are likewise twofold. First—in things civil, the Lord ordering and over-ruling all the affairs and motions of single persons, families and nations, in a subserviency to his own most holy ends, designs and purposes. Secondly—in things natural, the Lord instructing the husbandman to discretion, and teaching him how to dress and till the earth, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; as also how to breed up and manage the beasts of the field, both greater and lesser cattle, for the use and service of man.

Meditation upon this lower part of the works of God, and his wonderful providences about them, may raise our souls very high; and while we wisely consider these natural things, we may grow more and more wise, in and for spirituals and eternals.

The worthy and ingenious Author of the ensuing discourse, hath supplied us with an excellent help, for the spiritualizing of the providential works of God in natural things, by godly meditations; we chiefly want the help of the Holy Spirit (without which all other helps and helpers are altogether insufficient) to frame and wind up our hearts, for this both profitable and delightful duty; yet the help which the Lord is pleased to give us for our direction in it, by the ministry of man, is not only not to be refused, but thankfully received and improved; and all little enough to bring our minds to, or keep them at this work: The best of saints, on this side heaven, have, though they are not only earthly minded, much earth in their minds; which, like a heavy clog at their heels,

or a weight at their hearts, presseth them down when they would make an essay to mount upward in meditation. We find it no easy matter to keep off earthly thoughts, when we are most seriously engaged in heavenly work; how hard it is then to get in, and be fixed upon heavenly thoughts, while we are engaged about earthly work; yea, are (for so is the husbandman) working the very earth, and raking in the bowels of it. It is a great part of our holiness to be spiritually minded, while we are conversing with God, through Jesus Christ, in spiritual duties; but to be spiritually minded, and to mind spiritual things, when we are conversing with the clods of the earth, and the furrows of the field; when we have to do with corn and grass—with trees and plants—with sheep and oxen; when we behold the birds and fowls of the air, the worms, and all that creep upon the ground; then, I say, to be spiritually minded, and thence to have our thoughts ascending and soaring up to God, in heart affecting and quickening contemplations, witnesseth an high degree of holiness, and of gracious attainments. To make a ladder out of earthly materials, for the raising of ourselves in spirit up to heaven, is the *art of arts*. Holy and happy indeed are they who, being taught of God, have learned this art, and live in daily practice of it. Earthly objects usually hinder us in our way, sometimes turn us quite out of our way to heaven. Many plough and sow, dig and delve the earth, till their hearts become as earthly as the earth itself: Many deal about the beasts of the field, till themselves become even brutish. Is it not then a blessed design which this Author aims at, so to spiritualize all sorts, or the whole compass of earthly husbandry, that all sorts of husbandmen may become spiritual and heavenly? It seems to me a token for good, that God

hath an intendment of some special good to the souls of such as are by profession proper husbandmen, seeing he hath lately put it into the hearts of *Mr. Richard Steel*, two faithful ministers (who, with all of *and this Author.* that profession, are husbandmen in a figure) to undertake, though in a different way, this subject, and to publish their labours in print, that they may be of use, not only for the present age, but for posterity.

And that the husbandman may be pleased as well as profited, in perusing the labors of this author; he hath, with singular aptness, and acuteness, contrived and contracted the sum and scope of every chapter into an elegant distich, or pair of verses, placed at the head of it, and concluded it with a choice melodious poem, suitable to, and dilating upon the whole matter of it. These, the husbandman, who can but read, may quickly learn and sing for his solace, instead of those vain ballads and corrupting rhymes, which many of that rank are apt to buy, and solace themselves withal, without any benefit, yea, much to their hurt, making their hearts more corrupt, carnal, and vain thereby.

Let me add one word more to the reader. This book *of Husbandry Spiritualized*, is not calculated only for the common husbandman; persons of any calling, or condition, may find the author working out such searching reflections and strong convictions, from almost every part, and particularly of the husbandman's work, as may prove, if faithfully improved, very useful to them; to some for their awakening, to consider the state of their souls, whether in grace, or in nature; to others for their instruction, consolation, and encouragement in the ways of grace, as also for their proficiency and growth in those

ways. That the blessing of the Lord, and the breathings of his good Spirit may go out with it, for all those gracious purposes, is the heart's desire and prayer of him, who is,

CHRISTIAN READER,

a sincere well-wisher to thy precious and immortal soul,

JOSEPH CARYL.

To his Reverend and Learned Friend, Mr. JOHN FLAVEL, *on his Spiritual Navigation and Husbandry.*

LETTERS of marque to his dear servant given,
By him that fists the ruffling winds of heaven:
To fight, and take all such as would not deign
T' acknowledge him the sea's great Sovereign.
He launch'd his little *pinnace*, and began
T' attack the vassals of *Leviathan*.
Auspicious gales swelling his winged sails,
Searches all creeks, and ev'ry bark he hails;
That scarce a ship our Western coast afford,
Which his brave *pinnace* hath not laid aboard.
And what among our riddles some might count,
Was seen at once at Berwick, and the *Mount*.
Yea, in more *ports* hath in one *lustre* been,
Than Hawkins, Drake, or Cavendish have seen.
And prizes of more worth brought home again,
Than all the *plate fleets* of the kings of Spain.
But that which makes the wonder swell the more,
Those whom he took were *beggars* all before.
Industrious spirit, to what a rich account
With thy blest Lord, will all these labors mount?

That ev'ry nerve of thy blest soul dost ply
To further heav'n's *spiritual husbandry*.
This kind of tillage which thou teachest us,
Was never dreampt of by Triptolemus.
Go, reader, turn the leaves, and me allow
To pray (whilst at work) *God speed the plough*.

NICHOLAS WATTS.

IN AUTHORIS OPERA.

Let Paracelsus and Van Helmont's name,
No more ride triumph on the wings of fame.
Lo, here's a *chemist*, whose diviner skill
Doth *hallowed*, from unhallowed things distil.
Spiritualizeth sea affairs; again,
Makes the rude ground turn tutor unto men.
Shews *Mariners*, as by a compass, how
They may unto the *port* of glory row.
Teacheth the *ploughmen*, from their work, to know
What duties unto God and man they owe.
Rare artist! who when many tongues are mute,
Mak'st things, that are inanimate, confute
The age's sins; by preaching unto eyes,
Truth, which, in other modes, their ears despise.
Prosper his pious labors, Lord! howe'er
Do not forget to crown the laborer.

Sic raptim canit.

DAN. CONDY.

THE EPISTLE, TO THE INTELLIGENT COU TRY READER.

THOU hast here the fruit of some of my spare ho which were thus employed, when, by a sad provide I was thrust from the society of many dear friends, a solitary country dwelling. I hope none will envy these innocent delights, which I made out of my lo walks, whereby the Lord sweetened my solitudes th It is possible you may find some passages here that harmlessly pleasant ; yet I assure you, I know of n that the most *Cynical Reader* can censure, as sinf light and vain. I must acknowledge, to the praise of G that I have found some of those (which possibly som my readers will call the slightest, and most trifling s jects of meditation) to be the ordinances for *instruct caution*, and consolation to my own soul; yea, I h found such a degree of comfort in these things, th has greatly tended to endear a country life to me. I u much better understand the saying of Horace, than w I learned it at school,

Novistine locum potiorem rure beato ?
Est ubi plus tepeant hyemes ? Ubi gratior aura ?
O rus, quando ego te adspiciam ? Quandoque licebi
Nunc veterum libris, nunc somno, et inertibus hort
Ducere solicitæ jucunda oblivio vitæ. (i. e.)

What life can with the country life compare ?
Where breathes the purest, and most healthful ai
Where, undisturb'd, my study I pursue,
And, when I sleep, bid all my cares adieu.

HOR. SAT. 6

And what I have found so beneficial to myself, I cannot but think may be so to others. I assure thee, reader, I am not fond of any of these conceptions; and yet I think I may modestly enough say, that the emptiest leaf in this book may serve for more and better uses, than a mere diversion, when thou canst find leisure to peruse it. I know, your troubles and cares are many; and though your condition of life hath many innocent comforts, and outward mercies to sweeten it, yet I believe most of you have found that ancient saying of Anacreon experimentally true:

'Some bitter troubles countrymen do meet,
'Wherewith the Lord doth intermix their sweet.'

The *cares* of your *minds* are commonly no less than the *pains* of your *bodies;* it concerns you, therefore, to *sweeten* what you cannot *avoid;* and I know no better way for that, than what is here directed to. O friends! what advantages have you for a spiritual life? Why may you not have two harvests every year? One for your souls, another for your bodies; if you could thus learn to husband your husbandry. Methinks spiritual meditations do even put themselves upon you. Husbandmen of old were generally presumed to be *honest* and *good* men; what else means that saying of Meander,

'Profess thyself an husbandman,
'And wicked too! believe't that can.'

Whether you are godly or wicked, is not for me to determine. If you are not godly, it is my wish under God to make you so: nor can I think of a more probable means of accomplishing this, than the one I have here adopted.

Methinks it should be a pleasure to you, when you come weary out of the fields from plough, or any other labor,

to sit down in the evening, and read that chapter which concerns that particular business, and *refresh* your *souls*, even from that which hath *wearied* your *bodies*. Were your hearts but heavenly, and more time allowed for spiritual husbandry, your inward comforts would be much more, and your outward gains none the less, for if the success of all your civil labors and employments, depend upon the pleasure and will of God, as all that are not Atheists do acknowledge, then, certainly, your business can succeed never the worse for your endeavors to please him, upon whose pleasure it so entirely depends. I have many times lifted up my heart to heaven, whilst these papers were under my hand, for a special blessing to accompany them, when they should be in yours. If the Lord accomplish my desires by them upon your souls, you shall enjoy two heavens, one here, and another hereafter. Would not that be sweet? The historian tells us, that Altitus Serarius was sowing corn in the field, when Q. Cincinnatus came to him bare-headed, with letters from the senate, signifying that he was chosen to the dictatorship. I hope the Lord will so bless and succeed these labours, that many of you will be called from holding the *plough* on earth, to wear the *crown* of glory in heaven; which is the sincere desire of

Your hearty well wisher,
JOHN FLAVEL.

THE PROEM.

1 Cor. iii. 9. *Ye are God's Husbandry.*

THE scope and design of the following chapters, being the spiritual improvement of husbandry, it will be neces-

sary, by way of *proem*, to acquaint the reader with the foundation and general rules of this art in the scriptures, thereby to procure greater respect unto, and prevent prejudice against composures of this kind.

To this end, I shall entertain the reader a little while upon what this scripture affords us, which will give a fair introduction to the following discourse.

The apostle's scope in the context being to check and repress the vain glory and emulation of the Corinthians, who, instead of thankfulness for, and an humble and diligent improvement of the excellent blessings of the ministry, turned all into vain ostentation and emulation, one preferring *Paul*, and others *Apollos*; in the mean time depriving themselves of the choice blessings they might have received from them both.

To cure this growing mischief in the churches, he checks the vanity, and discovers the evil of such practices by several arguments, among which this is one,

Ye are God's Husbandry, q. d.

What are ye, but a field, or a plot of ground, to be manured and cultivated for God? And what are Paul, Apollos and Cephas, but so many workmen and laborers, employed by God, the great husbandman, to plant and water you all?

If, then, you shall glory in some, and despise others, you take the ready way to deprive yourselves of the benefits and mercies you might receive from the joint ministry of them all. God hath used me to plant you, and Apollos to water you; you are obliged to bless him for the ministry of both, and it will be your sin if you despise either. If the workmen be discouraged in their labors, it is the field that loses and suffers by it; so that

the words are a similitude, serving to illustrate the re lation;

1. Which the churches have to God.

2. Which God's ministers have to the churches.

1. The relation betwixt God and them is like that o an husbandman to his ground or tillage. The Gree word signifies God's* *arable*, or that plot of ground whic God manures by the ministry of pastors or teachers.

2. It serves to illustrate the relation that the ministe of Christ sustain to the churches, which is like that o the husband's servants to him, and his fields; which e cellent notion carries in it the perpetual necessity of gospel ministry. For what fruit can be expected, whe there are none to till the ground? As also the diligenc accountableness, and rewards which these laborers are give to, and receive from God, the great husbandma All runs into this,

"That the life and employment of an husbandman e cellently shadows forth the relation betwixt God and h church, and the relative duties betwixt its ministers a members."

Or more briefly thus:

"The church is God's husbandry, about which h ministers are employed."

I shall not here observe my usual method, intending n more than a preface to the following discourse, but onl open the particulars wherein the resemblance consist and then draw some Corollaries from the whole. Th first I shall divide into the twenty following particular

* The faithful, or believers, are called God's husbandry, (*geo geon*) because God cultivates them as land by means of spiritu teachers, or pastors. *Rav.*

1. *Prop.* The husbandman purchases his fields, and gives a valuable consideration for them. Jer. xxxii. 9, 10.

Reddit. So hath God purchased his church with a full valuable price. Ye are not your own, said the apostle, ye are bought with a price. Feed the church of God which he hath purchased or acquired with his own blood. O dear bought inheritance! How much does this bespeak its worth, or rather the high esteem in which it is held by God. Never was an inheritance bought at such a rate. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. In him we, the church, have *redemption through his blood*, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. As without the shedding of blood, there is no remission, so without a special application of the merits of Christ's blood, there is no salvation for any of the fallen race. Reader, think not that thou art purchased to Christ, if thou art not pardoned by him; and be assured that if he does not pardon thee, he will certainly condemn thee.

2. *Prop.* Husbandmen divide and separate their own lands from other men's. They have their land-marks and boundaries, by which property is preserved, Deut. xxvii. 17. Prov. xxii. 28.

Reddit. So are the people of God wonderfully separated and distinguished from the people of the world. The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself. And, the Lord knoweth them that are his. They were set apart from incorrigible sinners, in the mind of God, before the foundation of the world. They are separated from all impenitent sinners by a special act of regenerating grace. They will also, soon be separated from this world of sin, of sinners, and of sorrow, and be united with holy

beings in heaven, never to be separated. Lift up thy head, O christian reader, and rejoice, in hope of that blessed and long wished for day, when thou wilt receive the end of thy faith, even the salvation of thy soul.

3. *Prop.* Corn-fields are carefully fenced by the husbandman with hedges and ditches, to preserve their fruits from beasts that would otherwise overrun and destroy them—*Non minor est virtus quam quærere parta tueri.* It is as good husbandry to keep what we have, as to acquire more than we had.

Reddit. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, and he fenced it. Isa. v. 1, 2. No inheritance is better defended and secured, than the Lord's inheritance, Psal. cxxv. 2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people.* So careful is he for their safety, *that he createth upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.* Isa. iv. 5. Not a particular saint, but is hedged about and inclosed in arms of power and love. Job i. 10. *Thou hast made a hedge about him.* The Devil fain would, but by his own confession could not, break over that hedge to touch Job, till God's permission made a gap for him; yea, he not only makes an hedge, but a wall about them, and that of fire. Zech. ii. 5. Sets a guard of angels *to encamp round about them that fear him.* Psal. xxxiv. 7. And will not trust them with a single guard of angels neither, though their power be great, and love to the saints as great, but watches over them himself also. Isa. xxvii. 2. 3. *Sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine, I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.*

4. *Prop.* Husbandmen take much pains, and are sometimes at great expense, to enrich their arable ground, that it may be in a situation to bring forth plentifully.

Reddit. Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well, if not, cut it down. Luke xiii. 8. O the rich dressing which God bestows upon his churches! they are costly fields indeed, drest and fertilized, not only by precious ordinances and providences, but also by the sweat, yea, blood of the dispensers of them. "You Londoners (saith Mr. Lockier *in Colos.* p. 552,) are trees watered choicely indeed; it is stories of the palm-tree, that at its first transplanting into Italy, it was watered with wine. I cannot say, saith he, that you have been so watered by me—I dare not; but this I can humbly and truly say, that if our choicest strength and spirits may be named instead of water, wine; or if the blessing which hath gone along with these waters, at any time, hath turned them into wine, in vigor upon your souls, then hath God, by me, watered your roots with wine."

5. *Prop.* The husbandman builds his house where he makes his purchase, dwells upon his land, and frequently visits it; he knows that *such as* dwell far from their *lands*, are not far from *loss.*

Reddit. So doth God—wherever he plants a church, there doth he fix his habitation, intending there to dwell. Psalm xlvi. 5. *God is in the midst of her*, she shall not be moved. Thus God came to dwell upon his own fee and inheritance, in Judea. Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. "And I will set my tabernacle amongst you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. Which promise is again renewed to his churches of the New Testament. 2 Cor. vi. 16. And when the churches shall be in their greatest flourish,

and purity, then shall there be the fullest and most glo ous manifestation of the divine presence among the Rev. xxi. 3. "And I heard a great voice out of heave saying, behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and will dwell with them, and be their God." Hence t assemblies are called the places of his feet—and the they *behold the beauty of the Lord.* Psal. xxvii.

6. *Prop.* Husbandmen grudge not at the cost they a at for their tillage; but as they lay out vast sums upon so they do it cheerfully.

Reddit. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, a men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vin yard; what could have been done more to my vineyar that I have not done in it?" And as he bestows upon l heritage the choicest mercies, so he doth it with t greatest cheerfulness; for he saith, Jer. xxii. 41. "I w rejoice over them, to do them good; and I will plant the in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with r whole soul." It is not the giving out of mercy, sai one, that grieveth God, but the recoiling of his mer back again upon him by the creature's ingratitude.

7. *Prop.* When husbandmen have been at cost a pains about their husbandry, they expect fruit from answerable to their pains and expenses about it: "B hold," saith James, "the husbandman waiteth for t precious fruits of the earth." James v. 7.

Reddit. "And he looked that it should bring for fruit." Isa. v. 2. This heavenly Husbandman waits f the fruits of his fields also; never did any husbandm long for the desired harvest, more than God doth for t fruits of holiness from his saints: Great are the expect tions of God from his people: "And when the time the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husban men, that he might receive the fruits of it."

8. *Prop.* Husbandmen are much delighted to see the success of their labors, it comforts them over all their hard pains, and many weary days, to see a good increase.

Reddit. Much more is God delighted in beholding the flourishing graces of his people; it pleases him to see his plants laden with fruit, and his valleys sing with corn.—Cant. vi. 2. "My beloved is gone down to the garden, into his beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies."—These beds of spices, say * expositors, are the particular churches, the companies of believers; he goes to feed in these gardens, like as men go to their gardens to make merry, or to gather fruit. Cant. iv. 16. "He *eats his* pleasant fruit," viz. His people's holy performances, sweeter to him than any ambrosia; thus he feeds in the gardens, and he gathers lilies when he translates good souls into his kingdom above; "for the Lord takes pleasure in his saints, and will beautify the meek with salvation."

9. *Prop.* The husbandman is exceedingly grieved, when he sees the hopes of a good crop disappointed, and his fields prove barren, or blasted.

Reddit. So the Lord expresses his grief for, and anger against his people, when they bring forth no fruits, or *wild fruits*, worse than none. Hosea ix. 16. "Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up." Christ was exceedingly displeased with the fig-tree, and cursed it for its barrenness; It grieves him to the heart when his servants return to him with such complaints as these, *We have labored in vain, we have spent our strength for nought.*

* Christ is fed when he sees the graces of his people; he gathers lilies when he translates any good soul out of this life. *Trap. on the place.*

10. *Prop.* Husbandmen employ many laborers to work in their fields, there is need of many hands for such a multiplicity of business.

Reddit. God hath diversity of workmen also in the churches, whom he sends forth to labor in his spiritual fields. Eph. iv. 12. "He gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry." Amos iii. 7. "I have sent [my servants] the prophets." It is usual with the apostles to place this title of a servant among their honorary titles, though a profane mouth once called it *probosum artificium*, a sordid artifice. Christ hath stampt a great deal of dignity upon his ministers, in retaining them for the nearest service to himself. 1 Cor. iv. 1. "Let a man so account of us, as the ministers of Christ;" they are workers together with God: The husbandman works in the field among his laborers, and the great God disdaineth not to work in and with his poor servants, in the work of the ministry.

11. *Prop.* The work about which husbandmen employ their servants in the field, is toilsome and spending. And although they may not be weary of the service, yet are they sometimes wearied in it. How often do they feel as if they should be obliged to give out, before the object for which they labor, is effected.

Reddit. But O how much more toilsome and spending is the work of God's servants. It was said of Epaphroditus. That for the work of Christ he was sick, and nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply their lack of service. How applicable is the expression of the apostle, Whereunto I also labor, striving, according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. The servants

of God sometimes become so weary and spent, through much constant and hard labor, that it seems as if they would be obliged to relinquish their pursuits without effecting their desired object. Though they may have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, yet they sometimes feel desirous to abide longer in the flesh, that they may have an opportunity of doing something more for God and his church.

12. *Prop.* The immediate end of the husbandman's labor, and his servant's labor, is for the improvement of his land, to make it more flourishing and fruitful.

Reddit. The scope and end of the ministry is for the church's benefit and advantage. They must not lord it over God's heritage, as if the church were for them, and not they for the church; nor serve themselves of it, but be the church's servants for Jesus' sake. 2 Cor. iv. 6. The power they have received being for edification, and not for destruction. 2 Cor. x. 8. Christ hath given them to the churches; their gifts, their time, their strength, and all their ministerial talents, are not their own, but the church's stock and treasure.

13. *Prop.* The workmen that labor in the fields are accountable for their work to him that employed them.

Reddit. Church-officers are also accountable to God for all the souls committed to them. They are stewards of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. iv. 1. and stewards are accountable. "We watch for your souls," saith the apostle, "as they that must give an account." Heb. xiii. 7. If these servants be unfaithful in their work and trust, the blood of souls shall be required at their hands, Ezek. iii. 17, 18. which are *fulmina, non verba*, (saith Erasmus,) thunderbolts, rather than words. The guilt of

blood is the greatest guilt; and of all blood, the blood of souls.

14. *Prop.* Those that spend their time and strength all their days, in manuring and ploughing the fields, do maintain themselves and their families by their labors: their hands are sufficient for themselves and theirs.

Reddit. "Even so hath God ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel." 1 Cor. ix. 14. "The workman is worthy of his meat." Mat. x. 10. It is a sad thing, if those who break the bread of life to souls, should be suffered to want bread themselves. God would not have the mouth of an ox muzzled that treads out the corn, but have liberty to eat as well as work: Yet if any pretender to the ministry be like the heifer that loves to tread out the corn, (*i. e.*) cares to do no work, but such as brings in present pay, he therein sufficiently discovers his beast-like disposition. Ministers must be faithful in their master's work, and if men do not, God will reward them. For "he is not unrighteous to forget their work, and labor of love." Heb. vi. 10.

15. *Prop.* It is a great trouble to husbandmen in a busy time, to be put off from their labors by stormy weather, which drives them out of the fields, and makes them let all lie, till it clear up again; yet, mean while, they are not idle, but employ themselves in home-work.

Reddit. Even so in God's husbandry, it is an unspeakable affliction to God's workmen to be rendered useless and unserviceable to the churches, by those storms of trouble, which drive them from their public ministerial work. With what a heavy heart did Paul go off from his work at Ephesus, Acts xx. It spends a minister to preach, but more to be silent. It is a loud speaking judgment, when God shall say to them as to Ezekiel—*Son of man,*

I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, and thou shalt be dumb. Ezek. iii. 26. Such silencing providences, speaking thundering language to gracious hearts; yet, even then, the keepers of the vineyard have a private vineyard of their own to look after, they have much home-work, when no out-work.

16. *Prop.* There is a vast difference betwixt those fields which have been well husbanded and dressed by a skilful and diligent husbandman; and those that have been long out of husbandry. How fragrant is the one? How dry and barren the other? When you pass by a field well dressed and fenced, every thing prosperous, and in exquisite order, you may know, without further inquiry, that a good husbandman lives there.

Reddit. Thus stands the case betwixt those places which God hath blessed with a faithful painful ministry, and such as have none, or worse than none; for as the husbandman's cost and pains appear in the verdant and fragrant hue of his fields; so a minister's pains and diligence are, ordinarily, seen in the heavenly lives and flourishing graces of the people. The churches of Corinth and Thessalonica, where Paul, and other holy instruments, spent much of their time and pains, became famous and flourishing churches. 2 Cor. ix. 2. A special blessing comes along with a godly minister, to the place where special providence assigns him.—Such places, like Gideon's fleece, have the dew of heaven lying on them, whilst others round about are dry and barren.

17. *Prop.* The husbandman is not discouraged, though the seed lie long under the clods; he knows it will spring up at last, and reward him, or those that come after him, for their pains and patience in waiting for it.

Reddit. Ministers should not be presently discouraged

in their work, because they see but little or no appearan of all the seed they have sown among the people. T *servant of the Lord must be patient towards all, waiti if at any time God will give them repentance.* 2 Tim. 24, 25. And if it never spring up in his time, it may ter his death; and if so, he shall not fail of his rewa John iv. 36. 37. *And he that reapeth, receiveth wages, a gathereth fruit unto eternal life, that both he that sowe and he that reapeth, may rejoice together; and herein that saying true, one soweth, and another reapeth.* Thou ministers die, yet their words live; yea, their words ta hold of men when they are in the dust. Zech. i. 6.

18. *Prop.* Husbandmen find low grounds and valle most fertile; hills, how lofty soever they overtop t lower grounds, yet answer not the husbandman's pai as the valleys do; these are best watered and secur from the scorching heat of the sun.

Reddit. Experience shews us, that the humblest sai are most fruitful under the gospel; *These are they that ceive with meekness the ingrafted word,* Jam. i. 21. whc influences abide in them, as the rain doth in the low v leys. Happy is that minister, whose lot falls in such a ple sant valley. *Blessed are they that sow beside all such w ters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the a* Isa. xxxii. 20. among these valleys run the pleas springs, and purling brooks, which fertilize the neighb ing ground. Heavenly ordinances there, leave fruit influences.

19. *Prop.* The first crop is usually the best, and t longer the husbandman tills his ground, the less it prod ces; after a few years its vigor and strength is spent.

Reddit. The first entertainment of the gospel is co monly the best; and what good is done by the ministry

often done at its first entrance. New things are pretty, and very taking. *John at first was to the Jews a burning and shining light, and they were willing*, for a season, *to rejoice in his light.* John v. 35. Paul was highly valued among the Galatians at first; such was their zeal, that they could have plucked out their eyes, and have given them to him; but how quickly did this full tide ebb again; For he complains, Gal. iv. 15. *Where then is the blessedness ye speak of?*

20. *Prop* Lastly, When fields prove barren, and will not quit the husbandman's cost, nor answer the seed he sows *in them*, he plucks up the hedges, and lays it waste.

Reddit. So when churches grow formal and fruitless, the Lord removes his gospel-presence from them, plucks up the hedge of his protection from about them, and lays them open, as waste ground, to be over-run by their enemies. Jer. vii. 12. *Go to Shiloh, and see what I did unto it.* What is become of those once famous and flourishing churches of Asia? Are they not laid waste, and trodden down by infidels? And now go to, saith the great Husbandman, *I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will pull up the hedge thereof, and it shall be laid waste.* Isa. v. 5.

Thus you see the allegory opened in its particulars; from the whole, I shall present you with these five ensuing *corollaries.*

THE FIRST COROLLARY.

How great then are the dignities and privileges of the churches of Jesus Christ, whom he hath appropriated to himself, above all the people of the earth, to be his peculiar inheritance? The rest of the world is a waste wilderness; all other places, how pleasant soever, in respect of their natural amenity and delights, are truly enough called the dark places of the earth; dismal, solitary cells, where

Ziim and *Iim*, bitterns, cormorants, and every doleful creature dwells. But the church is the paradise of the earth, *a garden inclosed*, Cant. iv. 12. in whose hedge the gospel birds chirp and sing melodiously, Cant. ii. 1. Its beds are beds of spices, Cant. vi. 2. and betwixt its pleasant banks, a crystal river of living water runs, Rev. xxii. 1. the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the midst whereof the Lord himself delights to walk. Zion, with what pleasures dost thou abound; If Bernard was so ravished with the delights of his *monastery*, because of its green banks, and shady bowers, and herbs, and trees and various objects to feed his eyes, and fragrant smells and sweet and various tunes of birds, together with the opportunities of devout contemplation, that he cried out admiringly, *Lord! what delight dost thou provide, even for the poor!* How much more should we be ravished with Zion's glory? For, *beautiful for situation is Mount Zion*. Of whom it may much more truly be said, what a* chronicler of our own once said of England—That it is the fortunate island, the paradise of pleasure, the garden of God, whose valleys are like Eden, whose hills are as Lebanon, whose springs are as Pisgah, whose rivers are as Jordan, whose wall is the ocean, and whose defence is the Lord Jehovah. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee? Who can count the privileges wherewith Christ hath invested his churches? O let it never seem a light thing in our eyes, that we grow within his blessed inclosure. How sweet a promise is that, Exod. xix. 5. *Ye shall be to me a peculiar treasure, above all people; for all the earth is mine.*

* Speed's Chronicle.

THE SECOND COROLLARY.

Hence it follows, That spiritual barrenness is a great reoach and shame to Christians. Shall God's husbandry, hich is planted, watered, fenced, filled with favors and ercies, be like the barren heath in the desart? Surely it ould be said of every soul that grows here, as the histoan saith of Spain, that there is *nihil infructuosum, nihil rile*; nothing barren, or unfruitful in it. God's vineard is planted in a very fruitful hill. Isa. v. 1. *And rely they that are planted in the house of the Lord, should ourish in the courts of our God; they should bring forth uit, even in old age, to shew that God is upright.* Psal. ii. 13, 14. *They are created in Christ Jesus unto good orks, which God hath ordained they should walk in.* Eph. . 10. *They are married unto Christ, that they might bring rth fruit to God.* Rom. vii. 4. An empty branch is a disonor to the root that bears it, a barren field to the husandman that owns it; God cannot endure that in his fields, hich he suffers in the wilderness.

THE THIRD COROLLARY.

If the church be God's husbandry, then there is such a ecial, gracious presence of the Lord in his churches, as aot to be found in all the world beside. Where may ou expect to find the husbandman, but in his own fields? here lies his business, and there he delights to be. And here may we expect to find God, but in the assemblies of saints. *He walks among the golden candlesticks.* Rev. ii. *I will walk among you*, saith he, *and be your God.* 2 Cor. . 16. Upon this account the church is called JEHOVAH AMMAH, the Lord is there. Ezek. xlviii. *ult.* You may e the footsteps of God in the creatures, but the face of od is only to be seen in his ordinances. Hence, Psal. xvii. 4. *David longed for the temple, that he might see*

the beauty of the Lord. Now what is beauty, bu metry and proportion of parts? In the works of you see one attribute manifested in one thing, and in another thing; but in the *sanctuary* you may s ty, even in all the attributes of God displayed ther indeed, we find in Scripture such astonishing exp about the visions of God in his church, that in them, a man can see little difference betwixt it a en; for as the church is called heaven. Mat. x its description is like that of heaven. Heb. xii. *You are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to merable company of angels*, &c. And Rev. xxii. *shall see his face, and his name shall be written foreheads.* And ver. 6. the saints are represente *ing nearer to the throne of God, than the angels the* Hence also ordinances are called galleries, in whi saints and angels walk, beholding the glory of him upon the throne. Zech. iii. 7. *If you will keep my will give you galleries to walk in, among them that s*

THE FOURTH COROLLARY.

If the church be God's husbandry, then those employed in ministerial work ought to be men judgment and experience in soul affairs; for th the laborers, whom God, the mystical Husbandm ploys and intrusts about his spiritual husbandry. husbandmen employ ignorant persons, that neither stand the rules, nor proper seasons of husbandi much would such workmen damnify and prejudic He will not employ such to weed his fields, as k whe·t from tares; or to prune his trees, that thi *summer* as fit for that work as December; much l God. He qualifies all that he sends, with wisc their work. *His workmen approve themselves work*

deed, such as need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Tim. ii. 15. As Bezaleel was furnished with wisdom, before he was employed in tabernacle work; so Christ instructs his servants, with skill and insight, before they are employed in ministerial work. He gives them a mouth and wisdom, Luke xxi. 15. endues them with power from on high; as Christ was filled abundantly with the Spirit for his work, so, according to proportion, are those that are sent by him. John xx. 21, 22. *As my Father hath sent me, so send I you.* And as for those that run before they are sent, and understand not the mysteries of the gospel, I shall say no more of them but this, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

THE FIFTH COROLLARY.

To conclude—If the church be God's husbandry, that is, if husbandry have so many resemblances of God's works about the church in it, then how inexcusable is the ignorance of husbandmen in the things of God, who, besides the word of the gospel, have the teaching of the creatures, and can hardly turn their hands to any part of their work, but the Spirit hints one spiritual use or other from it to their souls? How do the scriptures abound with parables, and lively similitudes taken from husbandry? From the field, the seed, the plough, the barn, from threshing and winnowing; similitudes also from planting, grassing, and pruning of *trees;* and not a few from the ordering of cattle. So that to what business soever you turn your hands, in any part of your calling, still God meets you with one heavenly instruction or other. But, alas! how few are able to improve their civil employments to such excellent ends! These things are but briefly hinted in the scriptures, and those hints scattered up and down, that they know not where to find them; and if they could, yet

would it be difficult so to methodize them, as it is necessary they should be, in order to their due improvement by meditation.

And therefore I judged it necessary to collect and prepare them for their use: and in this manner to present them to you, as you find them in the following chapters. Read, consider, and apply; and the Lord make you good husbandmen for your own souls.

THE

FIRST PART

OF

HUSBANDRY SPIRITUALIZED.

CHAPTER I.

UPON THE INDUSTRY OF THE HUSBANDMAN.

In the laborious husbandman you see
What all true Christians are, or ought to be.

OBSERVATION.

THE employment of the husbandman is by all acknowledged to be very laborious! there is a multiplicity of business incumbent on him. The end of one work is but the beginning of another, every season of the year brings its proper work with it! sometimes you find him in his *fields*, dressing, ploughing, sowing, harrowing, weeding, or reaping; and sometimes in his *barn*, threshing or winnowing; sometimes in his *orchard*, planting, grafting, or pruning his trees; and sometimes among his *cattle;* so that he hath no time to be idle. As he hath a multiplicity of business, so every part of it is full of toil, and spending labor; he eats not the bread of idleness, but earns it before he eats it; and, as it were, dips it in his own sweat, whereby it becomes the sweeter to him. Tho' sin brought in the husbandman's sweat, Gen. iii. 19: yet now not to sweat would increase his sin, Ezek. xvi. 49.

APPLICATION.

Behold here the life of a serious christian, shadowe forth to the life. As the life of a husbandman, so th life of a christian is no idle nor easy life. They th take up religion for *ostentation*, and not for an *occupatio* and those that place the business of it in notions an idle speculations, in forms, gestures, and external obse vances, may think, and call it so ; but such as devo themselves unto it, and make religion their business, wi find it no easy work, to exercise themselves to godl ness. Many there are, that affect the reputation an *sweet* of it, who cannot endure the labor and *sweat* of i If men might be indulged to divide their heart betwi God and the world, or to cull out the cheap and eas duties of it, and neglect the more difficult and costly one it were an easy thing to be a Christian ; but surely t have a respect to all God's commandments, to live th life, as well as speak the language of a Christian, to b holy in all manner of conversation, is not so easy. Thi will be evident, by comparing the life of a Christia with the life of a husbandman, in these five particulars wherein it will appear, that the work of a Christian, i by much the hardest work of the two.

1. The husbandman hath much to do, many things t look after—but the Christian more ; if we respect th extensiveness of his work, he hath a large field indeed t labor in, Psalm cxix. 96. *Thy commandment is exceedin broad*, of a vast extent and latitude, comprising not only a multitude of external acts and duties, and guiding th offices of the outward man about them, but also taking i every thought and motion of the inner man within it compass.

You find in the word, a world of work cut out for Chris

tians; there is hearing work, praying work, reading, meditating, and self-examining work; it puts him also upon a constant watch over all the corruptions of his heart. Oh! what a world of work hath a Christian about him! For of them he may say, as the historian doth of Hannibal, they are never quiet, whether conquering or conquered. How many weak, languishing graces hath he to recover, improve, and strengthen? There is a weak faith, a languishing love, dull and faint desires to be quickened and invigorated.—And when all this is done, what a multitude of work do his several relations exact from him? He hath a world of business incumbent on him, as a parent, child, husband, wife, master, servant, or friend; yea, not only to friends, but enemies. And, besides all this, how many difficult things are there to be borne and suffered for Christ? And yet God will not allow his people to the neglect of any one of them; neither can he be a Christian that hath no respect to every command, and is not holy in all manner of conversation, Psalm cxix. 6. 2 Pet. iii. 11. every one of these duties, like the several spokes in a wheel, come to bear, in the whole round of a Christian's conversation; so that he hath more work upon his hands than the husbandman.

2. The husbandman's work is confessed to be spending work, but not like the Christian's. What Augustus said of the young Roman, is verified in the true Christian, *Quicquid vult, valde vult.* Whatsoever he doth in religion, he doth to purpose. Under the law, God rejected the *snail* and the *ass*, Lev. xi. 30. Exod. xiii. 13. And under the gospel, he allows no sluggish, lazy professor, 1 Tim. v. 11, 13. Sleepy duties are utterly unsuitable to the living God; he will have the very spir-

its distilled and offered up to him in every duty, John 24: he bestows upon his people the very substance of kernel of mercies, and will not accept from them as shells and shadows of duties: not the skin, but the inwards, and the fat that covered the inwards, was required under the law. Exod. xxix. 30. And every sacrifice under the gospel, must be *sacrificium medullatum*, a sacrifice full of marrow. Observe the manner in which their work is to be performed.

Rom. xii. 11. In serving God, fervent in prayer, and hasting her.

2 Pet. i. 10. In serving salvation, diligent: or doing it thoroughly, and enough.

1 Tim. iv. 7. In godliness, exercising or stripping themselves, as for a race.

Luke xiii. 24. In the pursuit of happiness, striving even as an agony.

Acts xxvi. 7. In prayer, serving God instantly: or in a stretched out manner: yea, pouring out their hearts before him, Psalm lxii. 8. as if the body were left like a dead corpse upon the knees, whilst the spirit is departed from it, and ascended to God. This is the manner of his work; judge, then, how much harder this work is, than to spend the sweat of the brow in manual labor.

3. The husbandman finds his work as he left it, he can one day where he left off the other, but it is not so he Christian; a bad heart, and a busy devil, dis- spoil his work every day. The Christian finds first in the morning as he left it at night; and about his work, how many set backs Satan stands at his right hand (the him, Zech. iii. 1. when he would of his own heart and nature)

4. The husbandman hath some resting days, when he throws aside all his work, and takes his recreation; but the Christian hath no resting day, till his dying day; and then he shall rest from his labors. Religion allows no idle day, "but requires him to be always abounding in the work of the Lord." 1 Cor. xv. 18. When one duty is done, another calls for him; the Lord's day is a day of rest to the husbandman, but no day in the week so laborious to the Christian. O, it is a spending day to him! When he hath gathered in the crop of one duty, he is not to sit down satisfied therewith, or say as that rich worldling did, Luke xii. 19. "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years;" but must to plough again, and count it well if the vintage reach to the seed-time, Lev. xxvi. 5. I mean, if the strength, influence, and comfort of one duty, hold out to another duty; and that it may be so, and there be no room left for idleness, God hath appointed ejaculatory prayer, to fill up the intervals, betwixt stated and the more solemn duties. These are to keep in the fire, which kindle the morning sacrifice, to kindle the evening sacrifice. When can the Christian sit down and say, *Now all my work is ended, I have nothing to do without doors, or within.*

Lastly, There is a time when the labor of the husbandman is ended; old age and weakness take him off from all employment; they can look only upon their laborers, but cannot do a stroke of work themselves; they can tell you what they did in their younger years, but now, say they, we must leave it to younger people; we cannot be young always. But the Christian is never superannuated as to the work of religion; yea, the longer he lives, the more his master expects from him. When he is full of days, God expects he should be full

of fruits. Psalm xcii. 14. "They shall bring fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing."

REFLECTIONS.

1. How hard have I labored for the meat that pe eth? Prevented the dawning of the day, and labored as in the very fire, and yet *The worldi* is the Christian's work harder than mine? *reflectio* Surely, then, I never yet understood the work of Christianity. Alas! my sleepy prayer formal duties, even all that ever I performed in my never cost me that pains, that one hour at plough done. I have either wholly neglected, or at best, z zily performed religious duties, that I may truly offer to God what cost me nothing. Wo is me, wretch! How is the judgment of Korah spiritually cuted upon me? The earth opened her mouth, swallowed up his body; but it hath opened its n and swallowed up my heart, my time, and all my tions. How far am I from the kingdom of God?

2. And how little better is my case, who have ir professed religion, but never made it my busines Will an empty, though splendid, pr *The formalist's reflection.* sion save me?—How many brave have perished in the storms, not standing their fine names, the *Pre ous*, the *Success*, the *Happy Return?*—A fine name not protect them from the rocks, nor will it sav from hell. I have done by religion, as I should done by the world; prayed, as if I prayed not heard, as if I heard not. I have given to God bu shadow of duty, and can never expect from him reward.

How unlike a Christian dost thou, also, O my soul, go about thy work; though upright in *reflections of* the main, yet how little zeal and activi-*ithful Chris-* ty dost thou express in thy duties? Awake, love and zeal, seest thou not the toil and pains men take for the d? How do they prevent the dawning of the day! labor as in the very fire till night; and all this for fle! Should not every drop of sweat which I see le from their brows, fetch, as it were, a drop of d from my heart? who am thus convinced and re-red of shameful laziness, by their indefatigable dili-e. Do they pant after the dust of the earth? Amos And shall I not pant after God, Psalm xlii. 1. my soul, it was not wont to be so with thee in the of my first profession. Should I have had no more nunion with God in duties then, it should have en my heart; I should have been weary of my life. is a time for one to stand idle, who stands at the of eternity? What, now slack-handed, when so to my everlasting rest, Rom. xiii. 11. or hast thou d the work of God so unpleasant to thee? Prov. 7. or the trade of godliness so unprofitable? Psal. 12. Or knowest thou not, that millions now in hell hed for want of serious diligence in religion, Luke 34. nor doth my diligence for God, answer to that h Christ has done and suffered, to purchase my iness; or to the preparations he hath made in hea-or me? Or dost thou forget that thy master's eye rays upon thee, whilst thou art lazying and loiter-Or would the damned live at this rate as I do, if day of grace might be recalled? For shame, my for shame! rouse up thyself, and fall to thy work,

with a diligence answerable to the weight thereof
it is no vain work concerning thee—it is thy life.

THE POEM.

Religion	*When* advanc'd in pow'r,
Will make you	*Husband* every hour.
'Twill make	*Men* strive with all their might.
And therein	*Find* a sweet delight.
If there were	*Wages* besides that pay
Christ gives	*To* cheer us in our way;
Should we not	*Do* the best we can?
For there's	*No* such reward from man.
Shall others	*Work*, and not regard
Their strength;	*To* get a small reward?
Whilst we	*Turn* slugs, and loiter thus?
O that	*Their* zeal might quicken us.
Why are our	*Hands*, and feet so slow,
When we	*Unto* our business go?
How can we	*Then* Christ's pay expect,
And yet the	*Christian's* work reject?
If this, then	*Also* that embrace
Them both;	*If* not, we both disgrace.
Some if	*They* could these two divide,
'Twould	*Please* them well, with Christ to s
But if they	*May* not, then it were
As good	*Cease* pleading, they'll not hear.
Rouse up	*From* sloth, my soul betake
Thee to thy	*Work*, no cavils make.
O strive,	*And* try! Saints say that even
The pain they	*Take*, hath much of heaven.
yet	*Their* best wine's kept till last,
ir rest, and	*Ease* come all so fast.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE THRIFTINESS OF THE HUSBANDMAN.

The hardest lab'rers are the thriving men:
If you'll have thriving souls, be active then.

OBSERVATION.

INDUSTRY and diligence is the way to thrive and grow in the world. The earth must be manured, or its increase is in vain expected; *Qui fugit molam, fugit farinam*: He that refuses the mill, refuses the meal, saith the proverb. *The diligent soul shall be made fat.* Solomon hath two proverbs concerning thriftiness and increase in the world. In Prov. x. 4. he saith, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." And in ver. 22. he saith, "The blessing of the Lord maketh rich." These are not *contradictory*, but *confirmatory* each of the other; one speaks of the *principal*, the other of the *instrumental* cause.—Diligence without God's blessing will not do it; and that blessing cannot be expected without diligence; therefore husbandmen ply their business with unwearied pains, they often lodge in the midst of their labors as that good husbandman Boaz did. Ruth ii. 3. They are *parsimonious* of their time, but *prodigal* of their sweat and strength, because they find this to be the thriving way.

APPLICATION.

If nature opens her treasures to none but the diligent, neither doth grace. He that will be rich, must be a careful Christian! and whosoever will closely ply the work of godliness, shall comfortably and quickly find, that in keeping God's commands there is great reward." Psalm xix. 11. God is a "bountiful rewarder of such as

diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6. They must not, inde work for wages,* nor yet will God suffer their work t unrewarded; yea, it sufficiently rewards itself. 1 T vi. 6. And its reward is twofold; (1.) Present, an part; (2.) Future, and in full. Mark x. 29, 30. N in this time, an hundred fold, even from suffering, wh seems the most unprofitable part of the work, and in world to come life everlasting. If you ask what pres advantage Christians have by their diligence? I answ as much and more than the husbandman hath from all toils and labors. Let us compare the particulars, and what the husbandman gets that the Christian gets not a Compare your gains, and you will quickly see the o

1. You get credit and reputation by your diligence is a commendation and honor to you to be active and s ring men: But how much more honor doth God put u his laborious servants? It is the highest honor of a cr ture to be active and useful for its God. Saints are c ed *vessels of honor*, as they are fitted for the master's u 2 Tim. ii. 21. Wherein consists the honor of angels in this, that they are ministering spirits, serviceable cr tures? And all the apostles gloried in the title of serva The lowest office in which a man can serve God, e that of Nethinim, or door-keeper, which was the low order or rank of officers in the house of God, Ezek. xl 10. 11. is yet preferred by David before the service the greatest prince on earth. Psalm lxxxiv. 10. It is small honor to be active for God.

2. You have this benefit by your labor, that thereby y avoid loose and evil company, which would draw you i mischief. By diligence for God the Christian also is

* *Non mercenarii sed operarii.*

cured from temptation; "God is with them, while they are with him." 2 Chron. xv. 2. Communion with God in the way of duty is a great preservative against temptation. The *schoolmen* put the question, how the *angels* and glorified saints become impeccant? And resolve it thus: That they are secured from sin by the beatifical vision; and sure I am that the visions of God, not only in glory, but now also in duty, are marvellous defences against sin; and they who are most active for God, have the fullest and clearest visions of God. John xiv. 21.

3. You have this benefit by your labor, that it tends much to the health of your bodies. The Christian has this benefit by his labor, that it tends to a healthful state of soul; "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright." Prov. x. 29. As those that follow their daily labors in the field have much more health than citizens that live idly, or scholars that live a sedentary life: So the active Christian enjoys more spiritual health, and is troubled with fewer complaints than others.

4. By diligence in your civil employments, you preserve your estates, and are kept from running behindhand in the world. Bailiffs trouble not such men's doors; they usually have the forefoot of their neighbors. And by activity and diligence for God, souls are kept from backsliding, and running back in their graces and comforts.—Remissness and intermission in our duties, are the first steps and degrees by which a soul declines and wastes as to his spiritual estate.

5. Your pains and diligence in the fields make your bed sweet to you at night. Eccles. v. 12. "Rest is sweet to a laboring man, whether he eat little or much." But the diligent life of a Christian makes the clods of the valley, *his grave, sweet unto him.* 2 Cor. i. 12. 2 Kings xx. 3.

"Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked befor thee," &c. Think, Christian, how sweet it will be fo thee, when thou comest to die, to say then as thy Re deemer did, when near his death. John. xvii. 4, 5. " have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; a now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self."

6. The expense of your sweat fills your purses, y get estates by your diligence and labor; but what are yo gains to the gains of Christians? They can get in an ho that which they will not part with for all the gold and si ver on earth. Prov. iii. 14.

So that compare these laborers, as to all their advant ges, and you shall see, that there is no trade like th which the diligent Christian drives.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Blush then, O my soul, at the consi-
deration of thy laziness and sloth, which *Reflections of t* is attended with so many spiritual wants! *slothful soul.* And can I wonder at it, when I refuse the painful way of duty, in which the precious fruits of god ness are only to be found? If the fruits lie upon the su face of duty, or could be had with wishes, I should n want them; but to dig deep and take pains I cannot. M desires, like those of the slothful man, kill me, becau my hands refuse to labor. Prov. xxi. 25. If every du were to be rewarded presently with gold, would I r have been more assiduous in them than I have been? A yet I know that a heart full of the grace and comfort the Holy Ghost is better than a house full of gold and s ver. O what a composition of stupidity and sloth am I have been all for the short cut to comfort, when co stant experience teacheth, that the further way about, painful duty, is the nearest way to it. What pains do hu

landmen take? What peril do seamen run for a little gain? O sluggish heart! wilt thou do nothing for eternal treasures?

2. If there be such great reward attending diligence in duty, then why art thou so apt, O my soul, to cast off duty, because thou findest not present comfort in it? How quickly am I discouraged, if I presently find not what I expect in duty? Whereas the well is deep, and much pains must be taken to draw up those waters of joy. Isa. xii. 3. There is a golden vein in the mount of duty, but it lies deep; and because I meet not with it so soon as I expect, my lazy heart throws by the shovel, and cries, dig I cannot.

3. If this be, indeed, the rich and thriving trade, why do I puddle about the poor, low things of the world so much, neglecting the rich trade of godliness for it? O how much of my time and strength have these things devoured? Had I employed that time in communion with God, would it not have turned to a better account? Thinkest thou in earnest, O my soul, that God hath endowed thee with such excellent faculties, capable of the most divine and heavenly employments, or that Jesus Christ hath shed his invaluable precious blood, or that he hath sent forth the glorious spirit of holiness, and all this to fit men for no higher nor nobler employments than these?

The worldling's reflection.

Is this the end of thy wonderful creation? Doth God whirl about the heavens in endless revolutions to beget time for this? Or doth he not rather expect that the weightiest work should engross thy greatest strength, and choicest hours? O that I could once consider, what a good Master Christians serve, who will not only abundantly reward them at night, but brings them their food into the

fields to encourage them in their labor! What pity is that so good a master should be so badly served as he has been by me?

THE POEM.

None will deny but those are blessed pains
Which are attended with the richest gains.
Grant this, and then most clearly 'tis inferr'd,
Soul-work to all deserves to be preferr'd.
This is an unknown trade: O who can count
To what the gains of godliness amount?
For one poor shilling, O what risques some run!
Some toiling, as i' th' fire, from sun to sun.
Whereas one hour spent with God, brings in
Such heav'nly treasures, that poor souls have been
Enrich'd for ever. Even as you see
A prince's favorite, upon the knee,
Can in an hour's time more wealth obtain,
Than all your lives by labor you can gain.
Pray'r-gains are great, and quick returns are made
Sure then the Christian drives the richest trade.
'Tis true, the hypocrite that never drove
A serious trade for heav'n, may bankrupt prove:
But holy souls, which mind and closely ply
Their bus'ness, greatly are enrich'd thereby;
The diff'rence 'twixt the one and t' other's, best
By such a simile as this, exprest:
As in a summer's day you often see
The wanton butterfly, and painful bee,
On fragrant flowers fix, whence one doth strive

To bear his precious burden to the hive;
The other's pains no profit with it brings,
His time is spent in painting of his wings.
When winter comes the bee hath full supplies,
The other creeps into an hole and dies.
Like different events shall be betwixt
The painful saint and lazy notionist.

CHAPTER III.

UPON THE CHEERFULNESS OF THE HUSBANDMAN.

The ploughman sings and whistles, though he sweat,
Shall Christians droop, because their work is great?

OBSERVATION.

THOUGH the labors of husbandmen are very great and toilsome, yet with what cheerfulness do they go through them? It is very delightful to hear the melody they make, by whistling, as they follow the plough; yea, the very horses have their bells, which make a pleasant noise.—*Horses* (saith Mr. Fuller,) *will do more for a whistle than a whip;* and their bells do, as it were, gingle away their weariness. I have been often delighted with this country music, whereby they sweeten their hard labors with an innocent pleasure, and verify the saying of the poet;

Tempus in agrorum, cultu consumere dulce est. OVID.

Altho' they plough from morning until night,
Time steals away with pleasure and delight.

APPLICATION.

But how much greater cause have the people of God to address themselves unto his work with all cheerfulness of

spirit? And, indeed, so far as the heart is spiritual, it d lights in its duties. It is true, the work of a Christian painful, and much more spending, than the husbandman' (as was opened, chap. 1.) but then it as much exceeds the delights and pleasures that attend it. What is t Christian's work, but "with joy to draw water out of t wells of salvation?" Isa. xii. 3. You may see what pleasant path the path of duty is, by the cheerfulness those that have walked in them. Psal. cxix. 14. "I ha rejoiced in the way of thy judgments, as much as in riches." And by the promises that are made to such. Psal. cxxxviii. 5. "Yea, they shall sing in the ways of t Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord." And agai "You shall have a song as in the night, when an holy s lemnity is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one goe with a pipe, to come to the mountain of the Lord, to t mighty One of Israel." Isa. xxx. 29.

And, lastly, by the many commands, whereby joy in t way of the Lord is made the duty of the saints. "R joice in the Lord, ye righteous, for praise is comely f the upright." Psal. xcvii. 12. "Rejoice, and again I s rejoice." Phil. iv. 4. where the command is doubled, y not only simple rejoicing, but the highest degree of t duty comes within the command. Psal. cxxxii. 9, "Shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." A Luke vii. 22, 23, they that are bid *to leap for joy*, wh about the most difficult part of their work. And that y may see there is a sufficient ground for it, and that i not like the mad mirth of sinners, be pleased to consid

1. The nature of the work about which they are e ployed: It is the most excellent and heavenly empl ment that ever souls were acquainted with. O what vishing and delightful thing it is to walk with God!

yet by this the whole work of a Christian is expressed. Genesis xvii. 1. Can any life compare with this for pleasure? Can they be chill that walk in the sun-shine? Or sad that abide in the fountain of all delights, and walk with him whose name is the God of all comfort. 2 Cor. i. 3. "In whose presence is the fulness of joy." Psal. xvi. 11. O what an angelic life doth a Christian then live?

Or, 2. If we consider the variety of spiritual employments, *Varietas delectat.* Change of employment takes off the tediousness of labor. Variety of voices pleases the ear, variety of colours delights the eye, the same meat prepared several ways, pleases the palate more, and clogs it less. But O the variety of choice dishes wherewith God entertains his people in a Sabbath! as the word, prayer, sacraments, &c. Isa. lviii. 13. If thou call the Sabbath thy delights; or as Tremellius renders it, thy delicate things. "My soul, (saith David) shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness." Psalm lxiii. 5.

3. or lastly, If we consider the suitableness of this work to a regenerate soul. Is it any pain for a bird to fly, or a fish to swim? Is the eye tired with beautiful objects, or the ear with melodious sounds? As little can a spiritual soul be wearied with spiritual and heavenly exercises. Rom. vii. 22. "I delight in the law of God after the inner man." *Gravia non gravitant in eorum loco* (saith the philosopher,) weighty things are not heavy in their own element, or centre; and surely God is the centre of all gracious spirits. A saint can sit from morning to night to hear discourses of the love and loveliness of Jesus Christ. The sight of your thriving flocks and flourishing fields, cannot yield you that pleasure which an upright soul can find in one quarter of an hour's communion with God. "They that are after the flesh, (saith the

apostle, Rom. viii. 5.) do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit." But then look how much heavenly objects transcend earthly ones, and how much the soul is more capable of delight in those objects, than the gross and duller senses are in theirs; so much doth the pleasure arising from the duty excel all sensitive delights on earth.

REFLECTIONS.

The carnal heart's reflection. How am I cast and condemned by this, may I say; who never favored this spiritual delight in holy duties. When I am about my earthly employments, I can go on unweariedly from day to day; all the way is downhill to my nature, and the wheels of my affections being oiled with carnal delight, run so fast, that they have need most times of trigging. Here I rather need the curb than the spur. O how fleet and nimble are my spirits in these their pursuits! but O what a slug am I in religious duties! sure if my heart were renewed by grace, I should delight in the law of God. Rom. vii. 22. All the world is alive in their ways, every creature enjoys his proper pleasure; and is there no delight to be found in the paths of holiness? Is godliness only a dry root, that bears no pleasant fruit? No, no, there are doubtless incomparable pleasures to be found therein; but such a carnal heart as mine savours them not.

The hypocrite's reflection. I cannot say but I have found delight in religious duties, but they have been only such as rather sprang from the ostentation of gifts and applauses of men, than any sweet and real communion I have had with God through them; they have rather proved food and fuel to my pride, than food to my soul. Like the nightingale, I

ing sweetly, when I observe others to listen to me, ıe affected with my music. O false, deceitful heart, delight as this will end in howling! Were my spirit it would as much delight in retirement for the en- ınt of God, as it doth in those duties that are most ed to the observation of man. Will such a spring ı maintain a stream of affections, when carnal mo- fail? What wilt thou answer, O my soul! to that on? Job xxvii. 9, 10. "Will God hear his cry when e comes upon him? Will he delight himself in the ghty? Will he always call upon God?" What wilt reply to this question? Deceive not thyself, O my thou wilt doubtless be easily persuaded to let go hou never delightest in, and, from an hypocrite in ın, quickly become an apostate from religion.

ım all this, the upright heart *The upright heart's* advantage to rouse up its delight *reflection.* l, and thus it expostulateth with

Doth the ploughman sing amidst his drudging la- and whistle away his weariness in the fields, and I droop amidst such heavenly employment? O my what wantest thou here, to provoke thy delight? If be such an affection as *delight* in thee, methinks ın object as the blessed face of God in ordinances l excite it. Ah! how would this ennoble all my es, and make them angel-like! How glad are those d creatures to be employed for God! No sooner they created, but they sang together, and shouted y. Job xxxviii. 7. How did they fill the air with nly melody, when sent to bring the joyful tidings of iour to the world! ascribing glory to God in the st, even to the highest of their powers; yea, this ıt would make all my duties Christ-like, and the

nearer that pattern the more excellent: he delighted to do his Father's will; it was to him meat and drink. Psalm xl. 7. John iv. 32, 34.

Yea, it would not only ennoble, but facilitate all my duties, and be to me as wings to a bird in flying, or sails to a ship in motion. *Non tardat uncta rota;* oiled wheels run freely: *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Aminadab.* O what is the reason, my God, my delight in thee should be so little? Is it not because my unbelief is so great? Rouse up my delights, O thou fountain of pleasure! and let me swim down the stream of holy joy in duty, into the boundless ocean of those immense delights that are in thy presence, and at thy right hand for evermore.

THE POEM.

O What a dull, desponding heart is mine!
That takes no more delight in things divine.
When all the creatures both in heav'n and earth,
Enjoy their pleasures, and are big with mirth.
Angels and saints that are before the throne,
In ecstasies and raptures, ev'ry one
Perpetually is held; each blessed spirit
The purest, highest joys doth there inherit:
The saints on earth, in their imperfect state,
Those peerless joys by faith do antedate.
To nat'ral men, who savor not this pleasure,
Yet bounteous nature doth unlock her treasure
Of sensitive delights; yea, strange to tell,
Bold sinners rant it all the way to hell.

Like fish that play in Jordan's silver stream,
So these in sensual lusts, and never dream
Of that dead sea to which the stream doth tend,
And to their pleasures puts a fatal end.
Yea, birds and beasts, as well as men, enjoy
Their innocent delights: these chirp and play;
The cheerful birds among the branches sing,
And make the neighb'ring groves with music ring:
With various warbling notes they all invite
Our ravish'd ears, with pleasure and delight.
The new-fallen lambs will, in a sun-shine day,
About their feeding dams jump up and play.
Are cisterns sweet? And is the fountain bitter?
Or can the sun be dark, when glow-worms glitter?
Have instruments their sweet, melodious airs?
All creatures their deligths, and saints not theirs?
Yea, theirs transcend these sensual ones as far
As noon day Phœbus doth a twinkling star.
Why droop I then, may any creature have
A life like mine for pleasure? Whoe'er gave
The like encouragement that Christ hath given,
To do his will on earth, as 'tis in heaven?

CHAPTER IV.

UPON THE DUE QUALITY OF ARABLE LAND.

Corn land must neither be too fat nor poor:
The middle state suits best with Christians, sure.

OBSERVATION.

Husbandmen find, by experience, that their arable lands may be dressed too much, as well as too little; if

the soil be over rank, the seed shoots up so much into the stalk, that it seldom ears well; and if too thin and poor, it wants its due nutriment, and comes not to perfection; therefore their care is to keep it in heart, but not to over-dress or under-dress it. The end of all their cost and pains about it is fruit; and therefore reason tells them that such a state and temperament of it, as best fits it for fruit, is best, both for it and them.

APPLICATION.

And doth not spiritual experience teach Christians that a mediocrity and competency of the things of this life, best fits them for the fruits of obedience, which is the end and excellency of their beings? A man may be over-mercied, as well as over-afflicted; *Rare fumant fœlicibus aræ*, the altars of the rich seldom smoke. When our outward enjoyments are by Providence shaped and fitted to our condition, as a suit is to the body, that sits close and neat, neither too short nor long; we cannot desire a better condition in this world. This was it that wise Agur requested of God. Prov. xxx. 8, 9. "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Against both he prays *equally*, not *absolutely*; that had been his sin, but comparatively and submissively to the will of God. He had rather, if God see it fit, to avoid both of these extremes; but what would he have then? Why, food convenient: or, according to the Hebrew, give me my prey, or statute-bread, which is a metaphor from birds which fly up and down to prey for their young, and what they get, they distribute among them; they bring them enough to preserve their lives, but not more than enough to lie mouldering in the nest. Such

a proportion Agur desired, and the reason why he desired it is drawn from the danger of both extremes. He measured, like a wise Christian, the conveniency or inconveniency of his estate in the world, by its suitableness or unsuitableness to the end of his being; which is the service of God. He accounted the true excellency of his life to consist in its reference and tendency to the glory of his God; and he could not see how a *redundancy*, or too great a *penury* of earthly comforts could fit him for that; but a middle estate, equally removed from both extremes, best fitted that end. And this was all that good Jacob, who was led by the same spirit, looked at, Gen. xxviii. 20. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, and give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." Poor Jacob, he desires no great matters in the world, food and raiment will satisfy him; in spiritual matters his desires are boundless, he is the most greedy and unsatisfied man in the world, Hos. xii. 4. but in the matters of this life, if he can get from God but *offam et aquam*, a morsel of meat and a mouthful of water, he will not envy the richest Crœsus or Crassus upon earth. *Cibus et potus sunt divitiæ Christianorum;* meat and drink are the riches of Christians. *Divitiæ sunt ad legem naturæ composita paupertas*, saith Pomponius Atticus; riches are such a poverty or mediocrity, as hath enough for nature's uses; and such a state is best accommodated, both to the condition, and to the desires of a saint.

1. To his condition; for what is a saint but a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, a man in a strange country travelling homeward? So David professed himself, Psalm xxxix. 19. "I am a stranger in this earth." And so those

worthies, who are now at home in heaven, Heb. xi. 13. they professed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and to seek a country; a *viaticum* contents a traveller, he will not incumber himself with superfluous things, which would rather clog and tire, than expedite and help in his journey.

2. It suits best with his desires, I mean his regular and advised desires; for,

1. A gracious soul earnestly desires a free condition in the world; he is sensible he hath much work to do, a race to run, and is loth to be clogged, or have his foot in the snare of the cares or pleasures of this life. He knows that fulness exposes to wantonness and irreligion. Deut. vi. 12. Hos. xiii. 6. It is hard, in the midst of so many tempting objects, to keep the golden bridle of moderation upon the affections. The heart of a Christian, like the moon, commonly suffers an eclipse when it is at the full, and that by the interposition of the earth.

It was Solomon's fulness that drew out and dissolved his spirits, and brought him to such a low ebb in spirituals, that it remains a question with some, whether he ever recovered it to his dying day. As it is the misery of the poor to be neglected of men, so it is the misery of the rich to neglect God. Who can be poorer than to have the world and love it? Or richer, than to enjoy but little of it, and live above it?

And, on the other side, extreme poverty is no less exposed to sin and danger. Lev. vi. 2, 3, 4. As high and lofty trees are subject to storms and tempests, so the lowest shrubs to be browsed on by every beast; and therefore, a saint desires a just competency as the *fittest*, because the *freest* state.

2. A gracious person desires no more than a compe-

cy, because there is most of God's love and care discovered in giving us our daily bread by a daily providence. It is betwixt such a condition and a fulness of creature-provisions in our land, as it was betwixt Egypt and Canaan; Egypt was watered with the foot from the river Nile, and little of God was seen in that mercy; but Canaan depended upon the dews and showers of heaven; and so every shower of rain was a refreshing shower to their souls as well as bodies. Most men that have a stock of creature-comforts in their hands, look upon all as coming in an ordinary natural course, and see very little of God in their mercies. Pope Adrian built a college at Louvain, and caused this inscription to be written in letters of gold on the gates thereof—*Trajectum plantavit, Louvanium rigavit, Cæsar dedit incrementum;* (i. e.) Utrecht planted me, Louvain watered me, and Cæsar gave the increase. One to reprove his folly wrote underneath—*Hic Deus nihil fecit;* here God did nothing. Carnal men, they sow, and reap, and eat, and look no further.

But now, when a man sees his mercies come in by the special and assiduous care of God for him, there is a double sweetness in those mercies; the natural sweetness which comes from the creature itself, every one, even the beasts, can taste that as well as thee; but, besides that, there is a spiritual sweetness, far exceeding the former, which none but a believer tastes; and much of that comes from the manner in which he receives it, because it comes, be it never so coarse or little, as a covenant-mercy to him. "He hath given bread to them that fear him, he is ever mindful of his covenant:" Psalm cxi. 5. Luther, who made many a meal upon a broiled herring, was wont to say, *Mendicato pane hic vivamus, annon hoc pulchre farcitur in eo, quod pascimar pane cum angelis et*

vita æterna, Christo et sacramentis: Let us be c
with coarse fare here, have we not the bread tha
down from heaven? Do we not feed with angel
pregnant instance of the sweetness of such mercies i
us by a worthy divine of our own, Mr. Isaac An
*" For my own part, saith he, however the Lo
seen cause to give me but a poor pittance of o
things, for which I bless his name, yet in the
thereof, I have many times observed so much of l
culiar providence, that thereby they have bee
much sweetened, and my heart hath been raised to
his grace. When of late under an hard dispen
which I judge not meet to mention, wherein I s
with inward peace conscientiously, all streams of
supplies being stopt, the waters of relief for mys
family did run low. I went to bed with some stag
and doubtings of the fountain's letting out itself
refreshing; but ere I did awake in the morning, a
was brought to my bed-side, which was signed by a
friend, Mr. Anthony Ash, which reported some une
ed breakings out of God's goodness for my c
These are some of his lines—Your God, who hath
you an heart thankfully to record your experiences
goodness, doth renew experiences for your enco
ment. Now I will report one which will rais
spirit towards the God of your mercy, &c." Wh
on he sweetly concludes, " One morsel of God's
sion, especially if it comes unexpected and upon p
when wants are most, will be more sweet to a sp
relish, than all former full enjoyments were."

Many mercies come unasked for, and they r

* Epistle to the Earl of Bedford; *ante ultimam.*

kfulness, but when mercies come in upon prayer, as a return of prayer, their sweetness more than les; for now it is both God's blessing upon his own tution, and a seal set to his promise at once. Psalm 16, 17. Doubtless Hannah found more comfort in Samuel, and Rachel in her Naphtali, the one being d of God, and the other wrestled for with God, as r names import, than mothers ordinarily do in their lren.

REFLECTIONS.

reflection of lesigning hy- ite.

Do the people of God desire only so much of the creature as may fit them for the service of God? What a wretch then am I, that have desired only so much ligion as may fit me to gain the creature! As God's le have subjected all their creature-enjoyments to ion, so oppositely, O my soul! thou hast subject- religion to thy wordly interests and designs. In- l of eating and drinking to serve God, I have served that I might eat and drink; yea, I have not only act- elow religion, but below reason also; for reason dic- plainly, that the means must never be more excel- than the end. Wretch that I am, to make religion a e to my lust, a stirrup to advancement, an artifice to y on my carnal designs; verily I have my reward, this is all the good I am ever like to get by it.

worldling's flection.

And no less should the worldling trem- ble, to consider how he hath cast off the duties of religion, made them stand aside and give place to the world. Instead of ring so much only as might make him serviceable to , he thrusts aside the service of God to get as much he world as he can, who is so far from making godli-

ness the end of his creature-comforts, that he rather looks upon it as an obstacle and hindrance to them. May not the very heathens make me blush? Could Aristotle deliver this as a true rule to posterity, to make religion our first and chief care? Could Aristippus say he would rather neglect his means than his mind? his farm than his soul? Will the very Mahometans, how urgent soever their business be, lay it all aside five times in the day to pray? Yea, it is common to a proverb among the very Papists, that mass and meat hinder no man; and yet I, that profess myself a Christian, thrust out duty for every trifle! O wretched soul! how hath the God of this world blinded mine eyes? Can the world indeed do that for me that Christ can do: Hath it ever proved true to them that trusted it, and doated on it? Hath it not at last turned them off as men turn off a sumpter-horse at night, that hath been a drudge to carry their gold and silver for them all day, and at last is turned out with an empty belly, and a galled back? O how righteous will that sentence of God be? Go cry to the gods whom thou hast served.

The gracious soul's reflection.

And may not many gracious hearts turn in upon themselves with shame and sorrow, to consider how unsatisfied they have been in that condition, that others have preferred and esteemed as the greatest of all outward mercies? I have, indeed, been fed with food convenient, but not contented? How hath mine heart been tortured, from day to day, with anxious thoughts, what I shall eat and drink, and wherewith I and mine shall be clothed? I pretend, indeed, that I care but for a competency of the world, but sure I am, my cares about it have been incompetent. Come, my distrustful earthly

heart, let me propound a few questions to thee about this matter, and answer truly to what I shall demand of thee.

Quest. 1. Hast thou here a continuing city? Art thou at home or upon thy journey, that thou art so solicitous about the world? Thy profession, indeed, speaks thee a stranger upon earth, but thy conversation a home-dweller.—Erasmus said he desired honors and riches no more than a weary horse doth a heavy cloak-bag. Wouldst thou not account him a fool that would victual his ship as much to cross the channel to France, as if she were bound for the East Indies? Alas! it will be but a little while, and then there will be no more need of any of these things. It is sad, that a soul which stands at the door of eternity, should be perplexing itself about food and raiment.

Quest. 2. Which of all the saints hast thou known to be the better for much of the world? It hath been some men's utter ruin. Seldom doth God suffer men to be their own carvers, but they cut their own fingers. "To give riches and pleasure to an evil man (saith Aristotle), is but to give wine to one that hath a fever." Where there is no *want* there is usually much *wantonness*. What a sad story is that of Pius Quintus; When I was in a low condition, said he, I had some comfortable hopes of my salvation; but when I came to be a cardinal, I greatly doubted of it; but since I came to the Popedom, I have no hopes at all. Though this poor, undone wretch spake it out, and others keep it in, yet, doubtless, he hath many thousand fellows in the world that might say as much, would they but speak the truth.

And even God's own people, though the world hath not excluded them out of heaven, yet it hath sorely clogged them in the way thither. Many that have been very humble, holy and heavenly, in a low condition, have suffered a

sad ebb in a full condition. What a cold blast have they felt coming from the cares and delights of this life, to chill both their graces and comforts! It had been well for some of God's people, if they had never known what prosperity meant.

Quest. 3. Is not this a sad symptom of a declining state of soul to be so hot, eager and anxious about the superfluous trifles of this life? Thinkest thou, O my soul! that one who walks in the views of that glory above, and maintains a conversation in heaven, can be much taken with these vanities? Do not the visions of God veil the tempting splendor of the creature? It was the opinion of some of the schoolmen, that the reason why Adam in Paradise was not sensible of his nakedness was, because he was wholly taken up in conversing with God. But this is certain, lively and sweet communion with God blunts and dulls the edge of the affections to earthly things; and canst thou be satisfied, my soul, with such gains as are attended with such spiritual losses?

Quest. 4. To conclude, is it not dishonorable to God, and a justification of the way of the world, for me, that profess myself a Christian, to be as eager after riches as other men? "After all these things do the nations seek." Mat. vi. 32. If I had no Father in heaven, nor promise in the world, it were another matter; but since my heavenly father knows what I have need of, and hath charged me to be careful in nothing, but only to tell him my wants, Phil. iv. 6, how unbecoming a thing is it in me to live and act as I have done! Let me henceforth learn to measure and estimate my condition, rather by its usefulness to God, than its content and ease to my flesh.

CHAPTER V.

UPON THE IMPROVEMENT OF BAD GROUND.

Spent barren land you can restore and nourish:
Decayed Christians, God can cause to flourish.

OBSERVATION.

WHERE land is spent out by tillage, or for want of manuring, the careful husbandman hath many ways to recover and bring it in heart again. He lets it lie fallow, to give it rest, and time to recover itself: carries out his sand, lime and compost, to refresh and quicken it again; and in pasture and meadow ground, will wash it, if possible, with a current of water, or the float of the ways after a fall of rain, which is to the earth as a spring of new blood to a consumptive body. He cuts down and kills the weeds that suck it out, and causes them to make restitution of what they have purloined from it by rotting upon the place where they grew. As careful are they to recover it, when it is spent, as an honest physician is of his patient in a languishing condition; for he knows his field will be as grateful to him, and fully requite his care and cost.

APPLICATION.

As man's, so God's husbandry is sometimes out of case, not by yielding too many crops, but too few. The mystical husbandman hath some fields, (I mean particular societies and persons, who were once fragrant and fruitful, like a field) which God hath blessed, but are now decayed and grown barren; whose gleanings formerly were more than their vintage now; the things that are in them are ready to die. Rev. iii. 3. It is possible, yea, too common for gracious souls to be reduced to a very low ebb, both

of graces and comforts; how low I will not say: C
tish divines tell us, that grace indeed cannot be to
termitted, nor finally lost; but there may be an c
of the act, though not an omission of the habit: '
may be perverted, though the faith can-
not be subverted; it may be shaken in, *How*
though not shaken out: Its fruits may fall, *grace i*
but its sap lies hid in the root. They de- *liever m*
merit the loss of the kingdom, but lose
it not effectively; the effect of justification may
pended, but the state of the justified cannot be dis

Certain it is, one that, like Paul, hath been
up with joy, even to the third heaven, and cried, *I*
than a conqueror, who shall separate me from th
Christ? may at another time lie mourning, as at t
of death, crying, *O wretched man that I am, who*
liver me from the body of this death? One that ha
ed in sweet communion with God, sunning himse
light of his countenance, may afterwards "walk
ness, and see no light. Isa. l. 10. He that hath
chor within the veil, and rode securely within the
ful harbor of assurance, may seem to feel his a
hope come home to him, and go adrift into the
ocean again, crying with the church, Lam. iii. 1
hope is perished from the Lord." His calm and
may be overcast and clouded, yea, filled with sto
tempests, lightnings and thunders; his graces, lik

* Gratia nec totaliter intermittitur nec finaliter amittit
omittitur, habitus non amittitur. Actio pervertitur, fides
vertitur. Concutitur, non excutitur. Defluit fructus,
cus. Jus ad regnum amittunt demeritorie, non effective
tus justificationis suspenditur, at status justificati non dis

ground flowers in the winter, may all disappear, and hide their beautiful heads.

To *God* he may say, I am cast out of thy sight. I know thou canst do much, but wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?

To the *promises* he may say, you are sweet things indeed, but what have I to do with you? I could once, indeed, rejoice in you, as my portion; but now I doubt I grasped a shadow, a fancy, instead of you.

To *saints* he may say, turn away from me, labor not to comfort me—O do not spill your precious ointment of consolation upon my head: for what have I to do with comfort? To former *experiences* he may say in his haste, you are all liars. To the *light of God's countenance* he may say, farewell, sweet light, I shall behold thee no more.—To Satan he may say, O mine enemy, thou hast at last prevailed against me, thou art stronger than I, and hast overcome. To *duties* and *ordinances* he may say, where is the sweetness I once found in you? You were once sweeter to me than the honey-comb; but now as tasteless as the white of an egg. O sad relapse! Deplorable change!—*Quantum mutatus ab illo?*

But will God leave his poor creatures helpless in such a case as this? Shall their leaf fall—their branches wither—their joy—their life—their heart depart? Will he see their graces fainting—their hopes gasping—the new creature panting—the things that are in them ready to die, and will he not regard it? Yes, yes—"there is hope of a tree if it be cut down, and the root thereof wax old in the earth, yet by the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant." Job xiv. 8, 9. This poor declining soul, as sad as it sits at the gates of hell, may rouse up itself at last, and say to Satan, that stands triumphing

over him, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Micah vii. 8. He may raise up himself upon his bed of languishing for all this, and say to God, *Though thou hast chastened me sore, yet hast thou not given me over unto death.* He may turn about to the saints that have mourned for him, and with a lightsome countenance say, *I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.* He may say to the *promises*, you are the true and faithful sayings of God. My unbelief did belie you; I said in my haste you were liars, but I eat my words, I am ashamed of my folly. Surely, O soul, there is yet hope in thine end, thou mayest be restored, Psal. xxiii. 3. thou mayest yet recover thy verdure, and thy dew be as the dew of herbs. For,

1. Is he not thy father, and a father full of compassions and bowels? And can a father stand by his dying child—see his fainting fits—hear his melting groans, and pity-begging looks, and not help him, especially having restoratives by him, that can do it? Surely, "As a father pities his own children, so will thy God pity thee." Psal. ciii. 12, 13. "He will spare thee, as a father spareth his own son that serves him." Mark iii. 17. Hark, how his bowels yearn!—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself. Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, I will surely have mercy on him." Jer. xxxi. 20.

2. Doth he not know thy life would be altogether useless to him, if he should not restore thee? What service art thou fit to perform to him in such a condition? "Thy days will consume like smoke, whilst thy heart is smitten and withered like grass." Psal. cii. 3, 4. Thy mouth

will be months of vanity, they will fly away, and see no good. Job. vii. 3. If he will but quicken thee again, then thou mayest call upon his name. Psal. lxxx. 18. but in a dead and languishing condition, thou art no more fit for any work of God, than a sick man is for manual labors; and surely he hath not put those precious and excellent graces of his spirit within thee for nothing; they were planted there for fruit and service, and, therefore, doubtless, he will revive thee again.

3. Yea, dost thou not think he sees thine inability to bear such a condition long? He knows "thy spirit would fail before him, and the soul which he hath made." Isa. lvii. 16. David told him as much in the like condition. Psal. cxliii. 7, 8. "Hear me speedily, O Lord, for my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto those that go down into the pit:" q. d. Lord, make haste, and recover my languishing soul; otherwise, whereas now thou hast now a *sick child*, thou wilt shortly have a *dead child*.

And in like manner Job expostulated with him. Job vi. 1, 2, 3, 11, 12. "My grief is heavier than the sand of the sea, my words are swallowed up, for the arrows of the Almighty are within me, and the poison thereof drinks up my spirits.—The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.—What is my strength that I should hope? Is my strength the strength of stones? or are my bones of brass?" So chap. vii. 12. "Am I a sea, or a whale?" Other troubles a man may, but this he cannot bear, Prov. xviii. 14. and, therefore, doubtless seasonable and gracious revivings will come. "He will not stir up all his wrath, for he remembers thou art but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." Psal. lxviii. 38, 39. He hath ways enough to do it; if he do but unveil his blessed face,

and make it shine again upon thee, thou art saved
lxxx. 3. The manifestations of his love will be
soul as showers to the parched grass; thy soul, tl
droops, and hangs the wing, shall then revive and
joy, Isa. lxi. 1; a new face shall come upon thy
they shall bud again, and blossom as a rose. I
but send a spring of* auxiliary grace into thy soul
tuate the dull habits of inherent grace, the work i
then shalt thou return to thy first work again. Re
5. and sing, as in the days of thy youth.

REFLECTIONS.

O this is my very case, saith many a poor Ch
thus my soul languishes and droops from day to d
is good news, indeed, that God both can and will
my soul; but sad that I should fall into such a stat
unlike am I to what I once was! Surely, as the
wept, when they saw how short the second *templ*
of the glory of the first; so I may sit down and w
terly, to consider how much my first love, and firs
excelled the present.

1. Is my heart so much in heaven now, as it was wont to be? Say, O my soul! dost thou not remember, when, like the belov- ed disciple, thou layest in Jesus's bosom, how didst thou sweeten communion with him? H less and impatient was thou in his absence! divin drawings were to thee as the hell of hell; what a was the world to me in those days! Had it not be conscience of my duty, I could have been willing t lie, that communion with Christ might suffer no in tion. When I awaked in the night, how was th *A co reflectio*

* Grace needs more grace to put in exercise.

s enlightened by the heavenly glimpses of the counte-
ce of my God upon me? How did his company shorten
se hours, and beguile the tediousness of the night? O
soul, speak thy experience, is it now as it was then?
, no, those days are past and gone, and thou become
ch a stranger to that heavenly life. Art thou able, with
th, to deny this charge? When occasionally I pass by
se places, which were once to me as Jacob's Bethel to
n, I sigh at the remembrance of former passages be-
ixt me and heaven there; and say, with Job, chap. xxix.
O that it were with me as in months past, as in the days
hen God preserved me, when his candle shined upon
y head, when by his light I walked through darkness,
hen the Almighty was yet with me, when I put on right-
ousness, and it clothed me, when my glory was fresh in
e! When I remember these things, my soul is poured
t within me."

2. Is thy obedience to the commands of Christ, and mo-
on to duty, as free and cheerful as they were wont to be?
all to mind, my soul, the times when thou wast borne
wn the stream of love to every duty. If the Spirit did
t whisper to thee, saying, *Seek my face*, how did my
irit echo to his calls, saying, "Thy face, Lord, will I
ek." Psal. xxvii. 8. If God had any work to be done,
w readily did I offer my service? Here am I, Lord,
nd me. My soul made me like the chariots of Amini-
b; love oiled the wheels of my affections, and "his
mmandments were not grievous." 1 John v. 3. *Non
dat uncta rota.* There were no such quarrellings with
e command, no such excuses and delays, as there are
w. No, such was my love to Christ, and delight to do
s will, that I could no more keep back myself from duty,
n a man that is carried away in a crowd.

Or, lastly, tell me, O my soul, dost thou bem self, or grieve so tenderly for sin, and for grie Holy Spirit of God, as thou wast wont to do? W merly I had fallen by the hand of a temptation, h wont to lie in tears at the Lord's feet, bemoaning How did I hasten to my closet, and there cry, li chap ix. 6. "O my God, I am ashamed, and blus up unto thee." How did I sigh and weep bef and, like Ephraim, smite upon my thigh, sayir *have I done?* Ah, my soul! how didst thou worl and cast about how to recover thyself again? I forgotten how thou wouldst sometimes look up bitterly? Ah! what a God have I provoked? W and goodness have I abused? Sometimes look weep: Ah! what motions did I withstand? Wh spirit have I grieved? Ah! my soul, thou woul abhorred thyself; thou couldst never have born thine heart been as stupid and as relentless then, If ever a poor soul had reason to dissolve itself i for its sad relapses, I have.

2. But ye mourn not, O my soul, as one without hope. Remember, *There is hope A su in Israel concerning this thing.* As low as *reflec* thy condition is, it is not desperate, it is not a disease that scorns a remedy: Many a man, t been stretched out for dead, hath revived again, many a comfortable day in the world; many a t hath cast both leaf and fruit, by the skill of a pruc bandman, hath recovered again, and been made bc ishing and fruitful. Is it not easier, thinkest tho cover a languishing man to health, than a dead man And yet this God did for me. Eph. ii. 1. "Is a too hard for the Lord? Though my soul draw nig

pit, and my life to the destroyers, yet he can send me a messenger, one among a thousand, that shall declare to me my uprightness; then shall he deliver me from going down into the pit, my flesh shall be fresher than a child's and I shall return to the days of my youth." Job xxxiii. 22.—Though I flourish, and much of my fruit too be gone, and I am a withering tree; yet as long as the root of the matter is in me, there is more hope of such a poor, decayed, withered tree, than of the hypocrite that wants such a root, in all his glory and bravery. His sun shall set, and never rise again; but I live in expectation of a sweet morning after this dark night.

Rouse up, therefore, O my soul, set thy faith to work on Christ for quickening grace, for he hath life in himself, and quickens whomsoever he will. John vii. 38. Stir up that little which remains. Rev. iii. 2. Hast thou not seen lively flames proceed from glimmering and dying sparks, when carefully collected, and blown up? Get amongst the most lively and quickening Christians; "as iron sharpens iron, so will these set an edge upon thy dull affections." Prov. xxvii. 17. Acts xviii. 15. But, above all, cry mightily to the Lord for quickening, he will not despise thy cry. The moans of a distressed child work upon the bowels of a tender father. And be sure to keep within thy view the great things of eternity, which are ready to be revealed; live in the believing and serious contemplations of them, and be dead if thou canst. It is true, thou hast reason enough from thy condition, to be for ever humbled, but no reason at all from thy God, to be in the least discouraged.

THE POEM.

THOU art the husbandman, and I
A worthless plot of husbandry,
Whom special love did, ne'ertheless,
Divide from nature's wilderness.
Then did the sun-shine of thy face,
And sweet illapses of thy grace,
Like April show'rs, and warming gleams,
Distil its dews, reflect its beams.
My dead affections then were green,
And hopeful buds on them were seen;
These into duties soon were turn'd,
In which my heart within me burn'd.
O halcyon days! thrice happy state!
Each place was Bethel, heaven's gate.
What sweet discourse, what heav'nly talk,
Whilst with thee I did daily walk!
Mine eyes o'erflow, my heart doth sink,
As oft as on those days I think.
For strangeness now is got between
My God and me, as may be seen
By what is now, and what was then;
'Tis just as if I were two men.
My fragrant branches blasted be,
No fruits like those that I can see.
Some canker-worm lies at my root,
Which fades my leaves, destroys my fruit.
My soul is banish'd from thy sight,
For this it mourneth day and night.
Yet why dost thou desponding lie?
With Jonah cast a backward eye.
Sure in thy God help may be had,
There's precious balm in Gilead.

That God that made me spring at first,
When I was barren and accurst,
Can much more easily restore
My soul to what it was before.
'Twas Heman's, Job's, and David's case,
Yet all recovered were by grace.
A word, a smile on my poor soul,
Will make it perfect, sound and whole.
A glance of thine hath soon dissolv'd
A soul in sin and grief involv'd.
Lord, if thou canst not work the cure,
I am contented to endure.

CHAPTER VI.

UPON THE INCURABLENESS OF SOME BAD GROUND.

No skill can mend the miry ground; and sure
Some souls the gospel leaves as past a cure.

OBSERVATION.

ALTHOUGH the industry and skill of the husbandman can make some ground that was useless and bad, good for tillage and pasture, and improve that which was barren, and by his cost and pains make one acre worth ten; yet such is the nature of some rocky or miry ground, where the water stands, and there is no way to cleanse, that it can never be made fruitful. The husbandman is fain to let it alone, as an incurable piece of waste or worthless ground; and though the sun and clouds shed their influences on it, as well as upon better land, yet that doth not at all mend it; nay, the more showers it receives, the worse it proves;

for these do no way fecundate or improve it—nothing thrives there but worthless flags and rushes.

APPLICATION.

Many, also, there are, under the gospel, who are given over by God to judicial blindness, hardness of heart, a reprobate sense and perpetual barrenness; so that how excellent soever the means are which they enjoy, and how efficacious soever to the conversion, edification and salvation of others, yet they shall never do their souls good. Ezekiel xlvii. 9, 11. "Every thing wheresoever the river comes shall live, but the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall never be healed, but be given to salt;" (i. e.) given to an obstinate and everlasting barrenness. Compare Deut. ix. 23. By these waters, saith the judicious * Mr. Strong, understand the doctrine of the gospel; as, Rev. xxii. 1. "a river of water of life, clear as crystal;" *Hic fluvius est uberrima doctrina Christi*, saith Mr. Brightman. This river is the most fruitful doctrine of Christ, yet these waters do not heal the miry, marshy places, (*i. e.*) men that live unfruitfully under ordinances, who are compared to miry, marshy places in three respects:

1. In miry places the water hath not free passage, but stands and settles there; so it is with these barren souls therefore the apostle prays that the gospel "may run and be glorified." 2 Thess. iii. 1. The word is said to run, when it meets with no stop, *Cum libere propagatur* when it is freely propagated, and runs through the whole man; when it meets with no stop, either in the mouth of the speaker, or hearts of the hearers, as it doth in these

2. In a miry place the earth and water is mixed to

* Spiritual barrenness, page 3.

gether; this mixture makes mire: So when the truths of God do mix with the corruptions of men, that they either hold some truths, and yet live in their lusts, or else when men do make use of the truths of God to justify and plead for their sins: Or,

3. When, as in a miry place, the longer the water stands in it, the worse it grows; so the longer men abide under the ordinances, the more filthy and polluted they grow: these are the miry places that cannot be healed, their disease is incurable, desperate.

O this is a sad case! and yet very common; many persons are thus given over as incorrigible and hopeless. Rev. xxii. 11. "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." Jer. vi. 29. "Reprobate silver shall men call them, for the Lord hath rejected them." Isa. vi. 10, 11. "Go make the heart of this people fat, their ears *dull*," &c.

Christ executes by the gospel that curse upon many souls, which he denounced against the fig-tree. Matt. xxi. 19. "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever, and immediately the fig-tree withered away." To be given up to such a condition, is a fearful judgment indeed, a curse with a witness; the sum of all plagues, miseries and judgments; a fatal stroke at the root itself. It is a woe to have a bad heart, saith one, but it is the depth of woe, to have a heart that never shall be made better. To be barren under the gospel is a sore judgment, but to have that *pertinax sterilitas*, a pertinacious barrenness; that is to be twice dead, and plucked up by the root, as Jude speaks.

And to shew you the woful and miserable state and plight of such men, let the following particulars be weighed.

1. It is a stroke at the soul itself, an inward spiritual

judgment; and by how much the more inward and spiritual any judgment is, by so much the more dreadful and lamentable. As soul-mercies are the best of mercies, so soul-judgments are the saddest of all judgments. If it were but a temporal stroke upon the body, the loss of an eye, an ear, a hand, a foot, though in itself it would be a considerable loss, yet it were nothing to this. *Omnia Deus dedit duplicia*, saith Chrysostom, speaking of bodily members; God hath given men double members; two eyes, if one be lost, the other supplies its wants; two hands, two ears, two feet, that the failing of one may be supplied by the help of the other; *animam vero unam* but one soul; if that perish, there is not another to supply its loss. "The soul," saith Plato, "is the man—that which is seen is not the man." The apostle calls the body a vile body, Phil. iii. 21. and so it is, compared with the soul; and Daniel calls it the sheath, which is but a contemptible thing to the sword which is in it. O it were far better that many bodies perish, than one soul that every member were made the seat and subject of the most exquisite torture, than such a judgment should fall upon the soul.

3. It is the severest stroke God can inflict upon the soul in this life, to give it up to barrenness; because it cuts off all hopes, frustrates all means, nothing can be a blessing to him. If one comes from the dead, if angels should descend from heaven to preach to him, there is no hope of him. "If God shut up a man, who can open?" Job xii. 14. As there was none found in heaven or earth that could open the seals of that book, Rev. v. 5. so is there no opening by the hand of the most able and skilful ministry, those seals of hardness, blindness and unbelief thus impressed upon the spirit. Whom justice so locks

up, mercy will never let out. This is that which makes up the *Anathema Maran-atha*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. which is the most dreadful curse in all the book of God, accursed till the Lord come.

3. It is the most indiscernible stroke to themselves that can be, and by that so much the more desperate. Hence there is said to be poured out upon them the spirit of slumber. Isa. xxix. 10. "The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes." Montanus renders it—The Lord hath mingled upon you the spirit of deep sleep. And so it is an allusion to a soporiferous medicine, mingled and made up of opium and such like stupefactive ingredients, which casts a man into such a deep sleep, that do what you will to him, he feels, he knows it not. "Make their eyes heavy and their ears dull, lest they should see and hear, and be converted." Isa. vi. 9, 10. This is the heart that cannot repent, which is spoken of, Rom. ii. 5. For men are not sensible at all of this judgment, they do not in the least suspect it, and this is their misery. Though they be cursed trees, which shall never bear any fruit to life, yet many times they bear abundance of other fair and pleasant fruits to the eye, excellent gifts and rare endowments; and these deceive and undo them. Matt. vii. 22. "We have prophesied in thy name." This makes the wound desperate, that there is no finding of it, no probe to search for it.

4. It is a stroke that cuts off from the soul all the comfort and sweetness of religion. A man may pray, hear and confer, but all those duties are dry stalks to him, which yield no meat, no solid substantial nutriment; some common touches upon the affections he may sometimes find in duty; the melting voice or rhetoric of the preach-

er may perhaps strike his natural affections, as another tragical story pathetically delivered may do; but to have any real communion with God in ordinances, any discoveries or views of the beauty of the Lord in them, that he cannot have; for these are the special effects and operations of the spirit, which are always restrained.

God hath said to such, as he did to them, Gen. vi. 3. "My Spirit shall no longer strive with them;" and then what sweetness is there in ordinances? What is the word, separated from the Spirit, but a dead letter? It is the Spirit that quickens. 2 Cor. iii. 2. Friend, thou must know that the gospel works not like a natural cause upon those that hear it; if so, the effect would always follow, unless miraculously stopt and hindered; but it works like a moral instituted cause, whose efficacy and success depend upon the arbitrary concurrence of the Spirit with it. "The wind blows where it listeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John iii. 8. *Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.* Ordinances are as the pool of Bethesda, which had its healing virtue only when the angel moved the waters, but the Spirit never moves savingly upon the waters of ordinances, for the healing of their souls, how many years soever they lie by them, though others feel a divine power in them, yet they shall not. As the men that travelled with Paul, when Christ appeared to him from heaven, they saw the light, but heard not the voice which he heard to salvation; so it is with these: they see the ministers, hear the words which are words of salvation to others, but not so to them. Concerning these miserable souls we may sigh, and say to Christ as Martha did concerning her brother Lazarus—Lord, if thou hadst been here in this sermon or in this prayer, this soul had not remained dead. But

here is the woe that lies upon him, God is departed from the means, and none can help him.

5. It is such a stroke upon the spirit of man, as is a fearful sign of his eternal reprobation. It is true we cannot positively say of a man in this life, he is a reprobate, one that God will never shew mercy to; but yet there are some probable marks of it upon some men in this world, and they are of a trembling consideration wherever they appear; of which this is one of the saddest. 2 Cor. iv. 5. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine upon them." So Acts xiii. 48. "As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed. Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." John x. 26. And again, Matt. xiii. 11. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to them it is not given." There cannot be a more dreadful character of a person marked out for wrath, than to continue under the ordinances, as the rocks and miry places do under the natural influences of heaven.—What blessed opportunities had Judas?—He was under Christ's own ministry—he often heard the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth—he was day and night in his company, yet never the better; and why? Because he was the *Son of Perdition*, that is, a man appointed to destruction and wrath.

6. And lastly, to add no more; it is such a stroke of God upon the souls of men, as immediately foreruns hell and damnation. Heb. vi. 8. "But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burnt." So that look, as some saints in this world have had a prelibation or foretaste of heaven,

which the scripture calls *the earnest of the Spirit;* so t is a precursor of hell, a sign of wrath at the door. may say of it as it is said of the pale horse in the Reve tion, that hell follows it. "If a man abide not in m saith Christ, John xv. 6. "he is cast forth as a bran and withered;" which is the very state of these barr cursed souls. And what follows? Why, saith he, "n gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they burned." Lo, this is the vengeance which the gospel ecutes upon this barren ground.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Well then, blessed be God that made me feel the saving power of the gospel.—O let God be exalted for ever for this mercy! that how defective soever I am in c mon gifts, though I have a dull understanding, a leak memory, a stammering tongue, yet I have felt, and feel the power of the gospel upon my heart. I b thee, my God, that although I labor under many spiri infirmities, yet I am not sick of this incurable disease. have given thee, indeed, just cause to inflict and exe this dreadful curse upon me also, but thou hast not d with me after my deserts, but according to the riche thy mercy. Some little fruit I bring forth, and wha is, is by virtue of my union with Jesus Christ. Rom. 4. And this hath more in it as to my comfort, thar the glittering gifts and splendid performances of the n glorious hypocrite can yield to him. If I might have choice, saith one, I would choose and prefer the n despicable and sordid work of a rustic Christian, be all the victories of Alexander, and triumphs of Cæ *Blessed therefore be the Lord, who hath abounded unt in all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Je*

reflection.

I cannot remember a sermon as another can, but bless-
be God that I am able to savour it and feel it; that I
ve an heart to love, and a will to obey all that God dis-
vers to be my duty.

e formal professor's reflection.

2. O then how little cause have I to make my boast of ordinances, and glory in my external privile-
s, who never bear spiritual fruit under them? If I
ill consider my condition, there is matter of trembling,
d not of glorying in these things. It may be while I
ve been glorying and lifting up my secure heart upon
em, the Lord hath been secretly blasting my soul under
em, and insensibly executing this horrible curse by
em. Shall I boast, with Capernaum, that *I am lifted up heaven*, since I may with her at last be cast down to
ll? And if so, Lord, what a hell will my hell be! It
ll be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than
me. It drew tears from the eyes of Christ, when he
s looking upon Jerusalem, under the same considera-
n that I doubt I have cause to look upon my own soul.
ke xix. 41. "He wept over it, saying, If thou hadst
own, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things
ich belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from
ine eyes." So long have I been a hearer, a professor
the gospel, so many years I have enjoyed its distin-
ishing ordinances, but have they not been all dry and
pty things to me; hath not the spirit of formality ac-
ted me in them? Have not self ends and worldly re-
ects lain at the bottom of my best duties? Have not
y discourses, in communion with saints, been trade
rds, speaking what I have learnt, but not felt? Sad is
y condition now, but it would be desperate and irrecov-
able, shouldst thou execute this curse upon me.

3. And what may I think of my condition! Lord, I acknowledge my unprofitableness, under the means, hath been shameful; and this hath made my condition doubtful. I have often trembled for fear, lest my root had been blasted by such a curse; but if so, whence is this trembling? Whence these fears and sorrows about it? Doth such fruit grow in the soil which thou hast cursed? I am told but now, that on whom this judgment falls, to them thou givest an heart that cannot repent. Lord, I bless thee for these evidences of freedom from the curse; for the fruits of fear, sorrow and holy jealousy. * The laws of men spare for the fruit's sake, and wilt thou not spare me also, my God, if there be found in me a blessing in the bud? Isa. lxv. 8. *The less fruitful Christian's reflection.*

4. To conclude, what a serious reflection should this occasion in every dispenser of the gospel? How should he say when he goes to preach the gospel, I am going to preach that word which is to be *a savour of life or death to these souls;* upon how many of my poor hearers may the curse of perpetual barrenness be executed this day! O how should such a thought melt his heart into compassion over them, and make him beg hard, and plead earnestly with God for a better issue of the gospel than this upon them. *The gospel-preacher's reflection.*

* The Roman laws defer punishing a woman with child. *Chryst.*

CHAPTER VII.

UPON THE PLOUGHING OF CORN-LAND.

The ploughman guides his plough with care and skill;
So doth the Spirit in sound conviction still.

OBSERVATION.

'r requires not only strength, but much skill and judg-nt to manage and guide the plough. The Hebrew rd which we translate to plough, signifies to be intent, n artificer is about some curious piece of work. The ugh must neither go too shallow, nor too deep in the th; it must not indent the ground, by making crooked rows, nor leap and make baulks in good ground, but guided as to a just depth of earth, so to cast the furrow straight line, that the floor or surface of the field may made plain, as it is, Isa. xxxviii. 25. And hence that pression, Luke ix. 62. "He that puts his hand to the ugh, and looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of aven." The meaning is, that as he that ploughs must ve his eyes always forward, to guide and direct his hand casting the furrows straight and even, for his hand will quickly out when his eye is off; so he that heartily olves for heaven must addict himself wholly and intent-to the business of religion, and not have his mind en-gled with the things of this world, which he hath left hind him; whereby it appears that the right manage-nt of the plough requires as much skill as strength.

APPLICATION.

This observation in nature serves excellently to shadow th this proposition in divinity, that the work of the irit in convincing and humbling the heart of a sinner,

is a work wherein much of the wisdom, as well as power of God, is discovered. The work of repentance and saving contrition, is set forth in scripture by this metaphor of ploughing.* Jer. iv. 3. Hos. x. 12. "Plough up your fallow ground;" that is, be convinced, humbled and broken-hearted for sin. And the resemblance betwixt both these works appears in the following particulars.

1. It is a hard and difficult work to plough; it is reckoned one of the most painful manual labors; it is also a very hard thing to convince and humble the heart of a secure, stout and proud sinner, indurate in wickedness. What Luther saith of a dejected soul, "That it is as easy to raise the dead, as to comfort such a one." The same I may say of the secure, confident sinner: It is as easy to rend the rocks as to work saving contrition upon such a heart; *Citius ex pumice aquam;* all the melting language and earnest intreaties of the gospel cannot urge such a heart to shed a tear; therefore it is called "a heart of stone," Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "a firm rock," Amos vi. 12. "Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plough there with oxen?" Yet when the Lord comes in the power of his Spirit, these rocks do rend and yield to the power of the word.

2. The plough pierces deep into the bosom of the earth, and makes, as it were, a deep gash or wound in the heart of it; so doth the Spirit upon the hearts of sinners, he pierces their very souls by conviction. Acts ii. 37. "When they heard this they were pricked," or † pierced point blank, "to the heart." "Then the word divides the soul and spirit." Heb. iv. 12. It comes

* Glossius Rhet. Sacra. p. 300.

† *Katenugefan*, punctim cedo, pungendo penetro.

the conscience with such piercing dilemmas, and ıe sword of conviction so deep into their souls, that is no staunching the blood, no healing this wound, ırist himself come and undertake the cure. *Hæret lethalis arundo;* this barbed arrow cannot be pull- t of their hearts by any but the hand that shot it in. urse with such a soul about his troubles, and he will ou that all the sorrows that ever he had in this , loss of estate, health, children, or whatever else, ut flea-bitings to this; this swallows up all other es. See how the Christian Niobe, Luke vii. 38. is ved into tears; *Now deep calleth unto deep at the of his water-spouts, when the waves and billows of o over the soul.* Spiritual sorrows are deep waters, ch the stoutest and most magnanimous soul would nd drown, did not Jesus Christ, by a secret and rting hand, hold it up and preserve it.

The plough rends the earth in parts and pieces, before was united, and makes those parts hang which formerly lay close. Thus did the spirit of :tion rend asunder the heart, and its most beloved Joel ii. 13. "Rend your hearts, and not your gar- :" That is, rather than your garments, for the is comparative, though the expression be negative. ıis rending implies not only acute pain; flesh can- rent asunder without anguish, nor yet only force ɔlence; the heart is a stubborn and knotty piece, ill not easily yield; but it also implies a disunion of ınited: As when a garment, or the earth, or any uous body is rent, those parts are separated which rly cleaved together. Sin and the soul are glued gether before, there was no parting of them, they

would as soon part with their lives as with their l
but now when the heart is rent from them truly, it i
rent from them everlastingly. Ezek. vii. 15—19.

4. The plough turns up and discovers such thin
lay hid in the bosom of the earth before, and were c
ed under a fair green surface from the eyes of
Thus, when the Lord ploughs up the heart of a s
by conviction, then the secrets of his heart are
manifest, 2 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, the most secret and sl
ful sins will then out; for "the word of God is
and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword,
cing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, a
the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thc
and secret intents of the heart." Heb. iv. 12. It i
the fire burn inwardly, so that the soul hath no re
confession give a vent to trouble. Fain would the
fling sinner conceal and hide his shame, but the wo
lows him through all his sinful shifts, and brings h
last to be his own accuser, witness and judge.

5. The work of the plough is but *opus ordinai*
preparative work in order to fruit. Should the hus
man plough his ground ever so often, yet if the se
not cast in and quickened, in vain is the harvest ex
ed. This conviction also is but a preparative to s
ther work upon the soul of a sinner; if it stick t
and go no farther, it proves but an abortive or unt
birth: Many have gone thus far, and there they
stuck; they have been like a field ploughed, but no
ed, which is a matter of trembling consideration
hereby their sin is greatly aggravated, and their e
misery so much the more increased. O when a
damned creature shall, with horror, reflect upon hi
in hell—How near was I once, under such a serm

sion! My sins were set in order before me—my ence awakened and terrified me with the guilt of many purposes and resolves I had then to turn to hich, had they been perfected by answerable ex- s, I had never come to this place of torment: but I stuck, and that was my eternal undoing. Many ave I known so terrified with the guilt of sin, that ave come roaring under horrors of conscience to eacher; so that one would think such a breach had ade betwixt them and sin, as could never be re- d; and yet as angry as they were in that fit with ey have hugged and embraced it again.

t is best ploughing when the earth is prepared llified by the showers of rain; then the work goes etly and easily, and never doth the heart so kind- , as when the gospel-clouds dissolve, and the free nd love of Jesus Christ come sweetly showering pon it; then it relents and mourns ingenuously. l xvi. 63. "That thou mayest remember, and be nded, and never open thy mouth any more, be- f thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for thou hast done." So it was with that poor peni- ke vii. 38. when the Lord Jesus had discovered the super-abounding riches of his grace, in the of her manifold abominations, her heart melted her—she washed the feet of Christ with tears. deed there is as much difference betwixt the tears are forced by the terrors of the law, and those are extracted by the grace of the gospel, as there ixt those of a condemned malefactor, who weeps ider the misery he is under, and those of a pardon- efactor, that receives his pardon at the foot of the

ladder, and is melted by the mercy and clemency of
gracious prince towards him.

7. The plough kills those rank weeds which grow
the field, turns them up by the roots, buries and r
them. So doth saving conviction kill sin at the ro
makes the soul sick of it, begets indignation in the he
against it. 2 Cor. vii. 11. The word *Aganaktesis* the
signifies the rising of the stomach, and being angry ev
unto sickness; religious wrath is the fiercest wrath; n
the soul cannot endure sin, it trembles at it. "I find
woman more bitter than death," saith penitent Solom
Eccl. vii. 26. Conviction, like a surfeit, makes the so
to loathe what it formerly loved and delighted in.

8. That field is not well ploughed where the plou
jumps and skips over good ground and makes baulks,
must run up the whole field alike; and that heart is n
savingly convicted where any lust is spared and left u
touched. Saving conviction extends itself to all sin
not only to sin in general, with this cold confession—I
A SINNER; but to the particulars of sin, yea, to the pa
ticular circumstances and aggravations of time, place, ma
ner, occasions, thus and thus have I done; to the sin
nature as well as practice; "Behold I was shapen in i
quity." Psalm li. 5. There must be no baulking of a
sin, the sparing of one sin is a sure argument thou art n
truly humbled for any sin. So far is the convinced so
from a studious concealment of a beloved sin, that
weeps over that more than over any other actual sin.

9. New ground is much more easily ploughed than th
which, by long lying out of tillage, is more consolidat
and clung together by deep rooted thorns and bramble
which renders it difficult to the ploughman. This
ground is like an old sinner that hath lain a long ti

hardening under the means of grace. O the difficulty of convincing such a person! Sin hath got such rooting in his heart—he is so habituated to the reproofs and calls of the word, that few such are wrought upon. How many young persons are called, to one obdurate, inveterate sinner? I do not say but God may call home such a soul at the eleventh hour, but I may say of these, compared with others, as Solomon speaks, Eccles. vii. 28. "One man among a thousand have I found," &c. Few that have long resisted the gospel, that come afterwards to feel the saving efficacy thereof.

REFLECTIONS.

1. O grace for ever to be admired! that God should send forth his word and spirit to plough up my hard and stony heart! yea, when he hath left so many of more tender, ingenuous, sweet and melting tempers, without any culture or means of grace. O blessed gospel—heart-dissolving voice! I have felt thine efficacy—I have experienced thy divine and irresistible power; thou art indeed sharper than any two-edged sword, and woundest to the heart; but thy wounds are the wounds of a friend: All the wounds thou hast made in my soul, were so many doors open to let in Christ; all the blows thou gavest my conscience, were but to beat off my soul from sin, which I embraced, and had retained to my everlasting ruin, hadst thou not separated them and me. O wise and merciful physician! thou didst indeed bind me with cords of conviction and sorrow, but it was only to cut out that stone in my heart, which had killed me if it had continued there. O how did I struggle and oppose thee, as if thou hadst come with the sword of an enemy, rather than the lance and probe of a skilful and tender-

The true convert's reflection.

hearted physician! Blessed be the day wherein my sin was discovered and imbittered! O happy sorrows, which prepared for such matchless joys! O blessed hand, which turned my salt waters into pleasant wine! and after many pangs and sorrows of soul didst, at length, bring forth deliverance and peace.

2. But O what a rock of adamant is this heart of mine! that never yet was wounded and savingly pierced for sin by the terrors of the law, or melting voice of the gospel! Long have I sat under the word, but when did I feel a relenting pang? O my soul! my stupified soul! thou hast got thy antidote against repentance, but hast thou any against hell? Thou canst keep out the sense of sin now, but art thou able to keep out the terrors of the Lord hereafter? If thou couldst turn a deaf ear to the sentence of Christ in the day of judgment as easily as thou dost to the intreaties of Christ in the day of grace, it were somewhat; but surely there is no defence against that. Ah! fool that I am, to quench these convictions, unles I know how to quench those flames they warn me of. *The stubborn heart's reflection.*

3. And may not I challenge the first place among all the mourners in the world, who have all lost those convictions which at several times came upon me under the word? I have been often awakened by it, and filled with terrors and tremblings under it; but those troubles have soon worn off again, and my heart, like water removed from the fire, returned to its native coldness. Lord! what a dismal case am I in! many convictions have I choaked and strangled, which, it may be, shall never more be revived, until thou revive them *The miscarrying soul's reflection.*

against me in judgment. I have been in pangs, and brought forth nothing but wind; my troubles have wrought no deliverance, neither havé my lusts fallen before them. My conscience indeed hath been sometimes sick with sin, yea, so sick as to vomit them up with an external, partial reformation; but then with the dog have I turned again to my vomit, and now I doubt I am given over to an heart that cannot repent. Oh! that these travailing pangs could be quickened again! but alas! they are ceased. I am like a prisoner escaped, and again recovered, whom the jailor loads with double irons. Surely, O my soul! if thy spiritual troubles return not again, they are but gone back to bring eternal troubles. It is with thee, O my soul! as with a man whose bones have been broken, and not well set; who must, how terrible soever it appear to him, endure the pain of breaking and setting them again, if ever he be made a sound man. O that I might rather choose to be the object of thy wounding mercy, than of thy sparing cruelty! If thou plough not up my heart again by compunction, I know it must be rent in pieces at last by desperation.

THE POEM.

THERE's skill in ploughing, that the ploughman knows,
For if too shallow, or too deep he goes,
The seed is either buried, or else may
To rooks and daws become an easy prey,
This, as a lively emblem, fitly may
Describe the blessed Spirit's work and way:

Whose work on souls with this doth symbolize ;
Betwixt them both thus the resemblance lies.
Souls are the soil, conviction is the plough,
God's workmen draw, the Spirit shews them how.
He guides the work, and in good ground doth bless
His workmen's pains with sweet and fair success,
The heart prepared, he scatters in the seed,
Which in its season springs, no fowl nor weed
Shall pick it up, or choke this springing corn,
'Till it be housed in the heavenly barn.
When thus the Spirit ploughs up the fallow ground,
When with such fruits his servant's work is crown'd;
Let all the friends of Christ and souls say now,
As they pass by the fields, *God speed the plough.*
Sometimes this plough thin shelvy ground doth turn,
That little seed which springs the sun-beams burn;
The rest uncovered lies, which fowls devour:
Alas ! their heart was touch'd, but not with pow'r.
The cares and pleasures of this world have drown'd
The seed before it peep'd above the ground.
Some springs indeed, the scripture saith that some
Do taste the powers of the world to come.
These embryos never come to timely birth,
Because the seed that's sown wants depth of earth.
Turn up, O God, the bottom of my heart;
And to the seed that's sown, do thou impart
Thy choicest blessing. Though I weep and mourn
In this wet seed-time, if I may return
With sheaves of joy, these fully will reward
My pains and sorrows, be they ne'er so hard.

CHAPTER VIII.

UPON THE SEED CORN.

The choicest wheat is still reserv'd for seed,
But gracious principles are choice indeed.

OBSERVATION.

HUSBANDMEN are very careful and curious about their ed-corn, that it may not only be clean and pure, but e best and most excellent of its kind. Isaiah xxviii. 25. He casteth in the principal wheat." If any be more ll and weighty than other, that is reserved for seed. is usual with husbandmen to pick and lease their seed- rn by hand, that they may separate the cockle and dar- l, and all the lighter and hollow grains from it, wherein ey manifest their discretion; for according to the vigor d goodness of the seed, the fruit and production is like be.

APPLICATION.

The choice and principal seed-corn, with which the elds are sowed, after they are prepared for it, doth ad- irably shadow forth those excellent principles of grace ıfused into the regenerate soul. Their agreement, as ey are both seed, is obvious in the ten following partic- lars, and their excellency above all other principles in even more.

1. The earth at first naturally brought forth corn and very seed yielding fruit, without human industry; but ace the curse came upon it, it must be ploughed and wed, or no fruit can be expected. So man at first had l the principles of holiness in his nature; but now they ust be infused by regeneration, or else his nature is as

void of holiness as the barren and untilled de
corn:

2. The earlier the seed is sown, the better it
and enabled to endure the asperities of the v
when grace is early infused, when nature is sa
the bud, grace is thereby exceedingly advan
was Timothy's singular advantage that he knew
tures from a child.

3. Frosts and snows conduce very much to
rooting of the seed, and make it spread and
much the better. So do sanctified afflictic
usually the people of God meet with after the
and often in their very seed time. 1 Thes. 1,
you became followers of us and of the Lord, h
ceived the word in much affliction." But if
fair weather then, to be sure they shall meet w
er hard enough afterwards. Heb. x. 32. "B
remembrance the former days, in which, after
illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictio

4. When the seed is cast into the earth, i
covered up by the harrow, the use whereof in
ry is not only to lay a plain floor, as they spe
open and let in the corn to the bosom of the
there cover it up for its security from birds t
devour it Thus doth the most wise God prov
security of that grace which he at first dissemin
hearts of his people. "He is as well the finis
author of their grace," Heb. xii. 2. and of this
be confident, *that he that hath begun a good wo
will perform it unto the day of Christ.* The ca
over the graces of his people, is like the coveri
for security.

5. Seed-corn is in its own nature of much m

and worth than other corn; the husbandman casts in the principal wheat. So are the seeds of grace sown in the renewed soul, for it is called "the seed of God," 1 John iii. 9. "the divine nature," 2 Peter i. 4. One dram of grace is far beyond all the glory of this world; it is more precious than gold, which perishes. 1 Pet. i. 7. "The price of it is above rubies, and all that thou canst desire is not to be compared with it." Prov. iii. 15.

6. There is a great deal of spirit and vigor in a little seed, though it be small in bulk, yet it is great in virtue and efficacy. Gracious habits are also vigorous and efficacious things. Such is their efficacy that they overcome the world. 1 John v. 4. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." They totally alter and change the person in whom they are. *He that persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which he once destroyed.* They enable the soul to do and suffer great things for God. Heb. xi. 33, 34, 35.

7. The stalk and ear are potentially and virtually in a small grain of corn. So are all the fruits of obedience which believers afterwards bring forth to God, virtually contained in those habits or seeds of grace. It is strange to consider, that from a *mustard-seed* (which, as Christ saith, is the least of all seeds) should grow such great branches, that the birds of the air may build their nests in them. Surely the heroical and famous acts and achievments of the most renowned believers sprung from small beginnings at first, to that eminency and glory.

8. The fruitfulness of the seed depends upon the sun and rain, by which they are quickened, as is opened largely in the next chapter; and the principles of grace in us have as necessary a dependance upon the assisting and exciting grace without us. For though it be true, they

are immortal seed; yet that is not so much for their ow strength as from the promises made to them, and th constant influx from above, by which they are revived an preserved from time to time.

9. The seed is fruitful in some soils more than in other prospers much better, and sooner comes to maturity. S doth graces thrive better and grow faster in some per sons than in others. "Your faith groweth exceedingly." 2 Thess. i. 3. "Whilst the things that are in others ar ready to die." Rev. iii. 2. Though no man's heart b naturally a kind soil to grace, yet doubtless grace is mor advantaged in some dispositions than in others.

10. And lastly, Their agreement as seed appears i this, the seed-corn is scattered into all parts of the fiel as proportionably and equally as may be. So is grac diffused into all the faculties—judgment, will and all th affections are sowed with these new principles. "Th God of peace sanctify you wholly." 1 Thess. v. 23.

And thus you see why principles of grace are calle seed. Now, in the next place, which is the second thin promised, and mainly designed in this chapter, to she you the choiceness and excellency of these holy princi ples with which sanctified souls are embellished an adorned; and to convince you that true grace excels a other principles by which other persons are actuated even as the principal wheat doth the chaff and refus stuff, I shall here institute a comparison betwixt grac and the most splendid common gifts in the world, and it transcendent excellency above them all will evidentl appear in seven following particulars.

1. The most excellent common gifts come out of th common treasury of God's bounty, and that in a natur way. They are but the improvement of a man's natur

abilities, or, as one calls them, the sparks of nature blown up by the wind of a more benign and liberal education; but principles of grace are of a divine and heavenly origin and extraction, not induced or raised from nature, but supernaturally infused by the Spirit from on high. John iii. 6. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." When a soul is sanctified by them, "it partakes of the divine nature." 2 Peter i. 4. "Is born not of the flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. In this respect they differ from gifts, as the heavenly MANNA which was rained down from heaven differs from common bread, which, by pains and industry, the earth produces in a natural way.

2. The best natural gifts afford not that sweetness and solid comfort to the soul that grace doth; they are but a dry stalk that affords no meat for a soul to feed on. A man may have an understanding full of light, and an heart void of comfort at the same time, but grace is a fountain of purest living streams of peace and comfort. 1 Peter i. 8. "Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart."—All true pleasures and delights are seminally in grace. Psalm xcvii. They are sown for them in these divine and heavenly graces, which are glory in the bud.

Like a precious stone in a toad's head.

3. Gifts adorn the person, but do not secure the soul from wrath. A man may be admired for them among men, and rejected eternally by God.—Who can considerately read that sixth chapter of the Hebrews, and not tremble to think in what a forlorn case a soul may be, though set off and accomplished with

the rarest endowments of this kind? Matt. vii. 23. We read that many shall say to Christ in this day, "Lord Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils," &c. and yet themselves at last cast out as a prey to devils. How divinely and rhetorically did Balaam speak and prophesy? Num. xxxiii. What rare and excellent parts had the Scribes and Pharisees who upon that account were styled *principes seculi*, the princes of the world. 1 Cor. ii. 8. What profound and excellent parts had the heathen sages and philosophers?—These things are so far from securing the soul against the wrath to come, that they often expose it unto wrath, and are as oil to increase the eternal burnings; but now gracious principles are the *ta echomena soterian*, as the apostle calls them, Heb. vi. things that accompany and have salvation in them. These are the things on which the promises of salvation run, and these treasures are never found but in elect vessels. Glory is by promise assured and made over to him that possesses them. There is but a little point of time betwixt him and the glorified spirits above; and how inconsiderable a matter is a little time which contracts and winds up apace? for "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." And hence the scripture speaks of them as already saved. Rom. viii. 24. "We are saved by hope," because it is as sure as if we were in heaven. We are made to sit in heavenly places.

4. Gifts may damnify the person that possesses them and it may be better in respect of a man's own condition he had never had them. *Knowledge*, saith the apostle *puffeth up*, 1 Cor. viii. 1; makes the soul proud and flatulent. It is a hard thing to know much, and not to know *it too much*. The saint's knowledge is better than the

scholar's, for he hath his own heart instead of a commentary to help him. Aristotle said, a little knowledge about heavenly things, though conjectural, is better than much of earthly things, though certain. "The world by wisdom knew not God," saith the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 12. *i. e.* Their learning was in their light, they were too wise to submit to the simplicity of the gospel. The excellent parts of the old heretics did but serve to midwife into the world the monstrous birth of soul-damning heresies. *Cupit abs te ornari diabolus*, as Austin said to that ingenious young scholar, the devil desires to be adorned by thee. But now grace itself is not subject to such abuses, it cannot be the proper *univocal cause* of any evil effect; it cannot puff up the heart, but always humbles it, nor serve the devil's designs, but ever opposes them.

5. Gifts may be given a man for the sake of others, and not out of any love to himself; they are but as an excellent dish of meat which a man sends to a nurse, not for her sake so much as for his child that sucks her. God indeed makes use of them to do his children good, the church is benefitted by them, though themselves are but like cooks, they prepare excellent dishes, on which the saints feed and are nourished, though themselves taste them not. They are *dona ministrantia, non sanctificantia*, ministering, but not sanctifying gifts, proceeding not from the good will of God to him that hath them, but to those he benefits by them.—And O what a sad consideration will this be one day to such a person to think, I helped such a soul to heaven, while I myself must lodge in hell!

6. Sin in the reign and power of it may cohabit with the most excellent natural gifts under the same roof, I mean in the same heart. A man may have the tongue of an angel, and the heart of a devil. The wisdom of

the philosophers, saith Lactantius, *non exscindit vitia abscondit*, did not root out, but hide their vices. learned Pharisees were but painted sepulchres. are but as a fair glove drawn over a foul hand: But grace is incompatible with sin in dominion, it purifie heart, Acts xv. 6. cleanses the conscience, Heb. ix crucifies the affections and lusts of the flesh, Gal. v is not content with the concealment, but ruin of co tions.

7. And lastly, Gifts must leave us at last. "Wh there be knowledge, that shall cease. All flesh is and the goodliness of it as the flower of the grass grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word o Lord abideth for ever. Isa. xl. 6—8. Many times leave a man before death. One knock, if it hit rig one saith, may make a wise man a fool; but, to be they all leave us at death. "Doth not his excel which is in him go away?" Job iv. 21. yea, then al tural excellency departs: Death strips the soul of those splendid ornaments; then the rhetorical tong struck dumb—the nimble wit and curious fancy sha tertain your ears with no more pleasant discourses. *quam jocos dabis*, as Adrian said to his departing but grace ascends with the soul into eternity, and the ceives its perfection and accomplishment. Gifts their leave of the soul, as Orpha did of Naomi, but saith then, as Ruth, "Where thou goest I will go where thou lodgest I will lodge, and nothing shall rate thee and me." Now put all this together, and judge whether the apostle spoke hyperboles wh said, "Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet I shew you a more excellent way." 1 Cor. xii. *ult.* And you have the choiceness of these principles also.

REFLECTIONS.

ie lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place, may the ous soul say :—How defective so-
I am in gifts, yet blessed be the *The gracious soul's*
l who hath sown the seeds of true *reflection.*
e in my heart. What though I am
amed and honored among men, let it suffice me that I recious in the eyes of the Lord. Though he hath not nded to me in gifts of nature, "Yet blessed be the and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who hath nded to me in all spiritual blessings, in heavenly pla- n Christ Jesus." Eph. i. 3. Is not a true jewel, though ned in the dirt, more precious than a false one, though n gold ?—Why art thou troubled, O my soul, for the of these things which reprobates may have ? and art rather admiring and blessing God for those things h none but the favorites of heaven can have ? Is not nce of pure gold more valuable than many pounds of d brass ? What though the dews of Helicon descend pon my head, if in the mean time the sweet influ- s of Zion fall upon my heart ? O my God ! how much er others are elated by the lights of their knowledge, ve cause, with humility, to adore thee for the heav- heat with which thou hast warmed my affections.
anse awhile, my soul, upon this point:
h what seed is my heart sown, and of *The deceived*
t kind are those things wherein I excel *soul's reflec-*
rs ? Are they indeed special seeds of *tion.*
e, or common gifts and natural excellen-
? If the latter, little cause have I to pride myself hem, were they ten thousand times more than they
If these things be indeed the things that accompany ation, the seed of God, the true and real work of

grace, then, (1.) How comes it to pass that I never found any throes or travailing pangs in the production of them? It is affirmed, and generally acknowledged, that the *new creature* is never brought forth without such pain and compunctions of heart. Acts ii. 37. I have indeed often felt an aching head, whilst I have read and studied to increase my knowledge; but when did I feel an aching heart for sin? O I begin to suspect that it is not right: Yea, (2.) and my suspicion increases while I consider that grace is of an humbling nature. 1 Cor. xv. 10. Lord, how have I been elated by my gifts, and valued myself above what was meet? O how have I delighted in the noise of the Pharisee's trumpet! Matt. vi. 2. No music so sweet as that. Say, O my conscience, have I not delighted more in the theatre than the closet? In the praise of men, than the approbation of God! O how many evidences dost thou produce against me? Indeed, these are sad symptoms that I have shewed thee, but there is yet another, which renders thy case more suspicious yet, yea, that which thou canst make no rational defence against, even the ineffectualness of all thy gifts and knowledge to mortify any one of all thy lusts. It is beyond all dispute, that gifts may, but grace cannot consist without mortification of sin. Gal. v. 24. Now what lust hath fallen before these excellent parts of mine? Doth not pride, passion, covetousness, and indeed the whole body of sin, live and thrive in me as much as ever? Lord, I yield the cause, I can defend it no longer against my conscience, which casts and condemns me, by full proof, to be but in a wretched, cursed, lamentable state, notwithstanding all my knowledge and flourishing gifts. O shew me a more excellent way. Lord! that I had the sincerity of the poorest saint, though I should lose the applause

of all my parts; with these I see I may go to hell, but without some better thing no hope of heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

UPON SPRINGING WEATHER AFTER SEED TIME.

By heaven's influence corn and plants do spring,
God's show'rs of grace do make his valleys ring.

OBSERVATION.

THE earth, after that it is ploughed and sowed must be watered, and warmed with the dews and influences of heaven, or no fruit can be expected. If God do not open to you his good treasure, the heavens to give rain unto the land in its season, and bless all the work of your hands, as it is, Deut. xxviii. 12. the earth cannot yield her increase. The order and dependence of natural causes in the production of fruit, is excellently described, Hosea ii. 21, 22. "I will bear the heavens, and they shall bear the earth; and the earth shall bear the corn, and wine, and oil; and they shall bear Jezreel." Jezreel must have corn, and wine, and oil, or they cannot live; they cannot have it unless the earth bring it forth; the earth cannot bring it forth without the heavens; the heavens cannot yield a drop unless God hear them, that is, unlock and open them.* "Nature, and natural causes, are nothing else but the order in which God works." This some heathens, by the light of nature, acknowledged, and therefore, when they went to plough in the morning, they did

* Natura nihil aliud est quam divinorum operum ordo. *Beren.*

lay one hand upon the plough, (to speak their own p
of painfulness,) and held up the other hand to Ceres, t
goddess of corn, to shew that their expectation of ple
was from their supposed deity.* I fear many Christi
lay both hands to the plough, and seldom lift up heart
hand to God, when about that work. There was an h
bandman, saith† Mr. Smith, that always sowed good se
but never had good corn; at last a neighbor came to hi
and said, I will tell you what probably may be the ca
of it—it may be, said he, you do not steep your seed
No, truly, said the other, nor did I ever hear that s
must be steeped. Yes, surely, said his neighbor, an
will tell you how; it must be steeped in prayer. Wh
the party heard this, he thanked him for his counsel,
formed his fault, and had as good corn as any man wha
ever. Surely it is not the husbandman's, but G
steeps, that drop fatness. *Alma mater terra*, the ea
indeed, is a fruitful mother, but the rain which fecund
and fertilizes it, hath no other father but God.
xxxviii. 28.

APPLICATION.

As impossible it is, in an ordinary way, for souls to
made fruitful in grace and holiness, without the dews
influences of ordinances, and the blessing of God u
them, as for the earth to yield her fruit without the na
ral influences of heaven; for look, what dews, showe
and clear shinings after rain are to the fields, that the w
and ordinances of God are to the souls of men. "
doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall disti
the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and
the showers upon the grass." Deut. xxxii. 2. "For

* Weem's Cerem. Law. † Smith's Essex Dove.

be rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and wareth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud; so hall my word be that goeth forth of my mouth." Isa. lv. 10, 11. And as the doctrine of the gospel is rain, so gospel ministers are the clouds in which those heavenly vapours are bound up; the resemblance lies in the following particulars:

1. The rain comes from heaven. Acts xiv. 17. "He gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons," &c. The doctrine of the gospel is also of an heavenly extraction and descent, they are heavenly truths which are brought to you in earthen vessels, things that are hid in God, and come from his bosom. Eph. iii. 8, 9. What Nicodemus said of Christ is, in a proportion, true of every faithful dispenser of the gospel. "Thou art a teacher come from God."—John iii. 2. You are not to look upon the truths which ministers deliver as the mere effects and fruits of their inventions and parts, they are but the conduits through which those celestial waters are conveyed to you. It is all heavenly, the officers are from heaven, Eph. iv. 12. their doctrine from heaven, Eph. iii. 8, 9. the efficacy and success of it from heaven, 1 Cor. iii. 3. "What I received of the Lord, saith Paul, that have I delivered unto you." 1 Cor. xi. 23. The same may every gospel minister say too. That is the first:

2. The rain falls by divine direction and appointment. "He causes it to rain upon one city, and not upon another." Amos iv. 7. You shall often see a cloud dissolve and spend itself upon one place, when there is not a drop within a few miles of it. Thus is the gospel sent to shed its rich influences upon one place and not upon another; it pours down showers of blessings upon one town or parish, whilst others are dry like the ground which lay near to

Gideon's wet fleece. "To you is the word of this salvation sent." Acts xiii. 26. *Sent;* it comes not by *chance*, but by *commission* and appointment, and it is sent to you by special direction. Ministers can no more go whither they please, than the sailing clouds can move against the wind. Paul and Timothy, two fruitful clouds, that sent down many sweet refreshing showers upon every place whither they came, the Lord sent them through Phrygia and Galatia, but forbid them to preach the word in Asia. Acts xvi. 6. "And when they essayed to go into Bithynia, the Spirit suffered them not." v. 7. But a man of Macedonia appears to Paul in a vision, and prayed him, saying, *Come over to Macedonia and help us.* v. 9. Thus you see how the *mystical* as well as the *natural* clouds are moved according to divine counsel; and though ministers are not now disposed to their respective places, in such an extraordinary way, yet there is still a special hand of the Spirit guiding their motions, which is seen partly in qualifying them for such a people, and partly in drawing out their hearts to elect and call them, and inclining their hearts to accept the call.

3. There is a great deal of difference in the showers of rain that fall upon the earth. Sometimes you have a hasty shower, which makes the ways float, and the streets run, but it is gone presently, the earth hath but little benefit by it; and sometimes you have a sweet, gentle, soaking rain, that moderately soaks to the root, and refreshes the earth abundantly. This is called the *small rain*, and the former "the great rain of his strength." Job xxxvii. 6. So it is in these spiritual showers, the effects of some sermons, like a sudden spout of rain, are very transient that touch the heart a little for the present, by way of conviction or comfort, but it fleets away immediately.

23. At other times the gospel, like a settled mo-
rain, soaks to the root, to the very heart. So did
eet shower which fell, Acts ii. 37. It searched the
went to the heart; the influences of it are some-
biding, and do much longer remain in, and refresh
rt, than the rain doth the earth. There be effects
ome hearts, by some sermons and duties, that will
eave it as long as they live. "I will never forget
cepts, for by them thou hast quickened me." Psal.
3.

he rain is most beneficial to the earth when there
veet, warm sun blasts with it, or after it. This the
e calls "a clear shining after rain," 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.
:h the *seminal virtue* of the earth is drawn forth,
n the herbs, flowers and corn sprout abundantly.
with gospel showers, when the sun of righteous-
ens upon poor souls under the word, darting down
ms of grace and love upon them, whilst they are
g on it, just as you sometimes see a sweet shower
le the sun shines out. O how comfortable is this,
:ctual to melt the heart! And as the warm rain is
:freshing, so when the word comes warmly, from
lting affections of the preacher, who imparts not
: gospel, but his own soul with it, 1 Thess. ii. 8,
:h abundantly more good than that which drops
rom the lips of the unaffected speaker.

lowers of rain do exceedingly refresh the earth,
n is refreshed by a draught of water, when his
re even spent. O how welcome is a shower to
sty ground! Hence the little hils are said to re-
: every side, yea to shout for joy, and sing when
er comes. Psal. lxv. 12, 13. But never were
: of rain so sweetly refreshing to the thirsty earth,

as gospel-showers are to gracious hearts, Col. iv. 8. they comfort their very hearts. What joy was there in Samaria, when the gospel came to that place. Acts viii. 8. It revives the soul, it is *mel in ore, melos in aure, jubilum in corde*, honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, and a very jubilee in the heart.

6. Rain is necessary at seed-time, to make ready the earth to receive the seed. Psalm lxv. 9, 10. "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it; thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly, thou settlest the furrows thereof, thou makest it soft with showers, thou blessest the springing thereof." And this the scripture calls the former rain. And as this is necessary about seed-time, so the latter rain is as needful about earing-time, to disclose the ear, and to bring it to perfection; both these are great blessings to the earth, and conduce to a plentiful harvest. Joel ii. 23, 24. "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former and the latter rain in the first month, and the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil." Thus the gospel hath a double use and benefit also. It is necessary as the former rain at seed-time, it causes the first spring of grace in the heart. Psalm xix. 7. And there could be, in an ordinary way, no spring of grace without it. Prov. xxix. 18. And as this former rain is necessary to cause the first spring of grace, so also it hath the use of the latter rain to ripen those precious fruits of the Spirit in the souls of believers. Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some

evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Were all the elect converted unto God, yet still there would be a necessity of a gospel ministry.

7. After a great glut of rain, usually there comes a drought; it is a common country proverb, *Wet and dry may one another.* And truly when a people are glutted with a fulness of gospel mercies, it is usual with God to shut up and restrain the gospel clouds, that for a time at least there be no dews upon them, and thereby teach them to prize their despised, because common, mercies at an higher rate. For, as a good man once said, mercies are best known by the back, and most prized when most wanted. "In those days the word of the Lord was precious, there was no open vision." 1 Sam. iii. 1. It is with spiritual as with temporal food, slighted when plenteous, but if a famine once come, then every bit of bread is precious. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her afflictions, and of her misery, all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old. Lam. i. 7. It is both a sinful and dangerous thing to wantonize with gospel mercies, and despise the plainest, if faithful, ministers of the gospel. The time may come when you may be glad of the plainest sermon from the mouth of the meanest ambassador of Christ.

8. To conclude, The prayers of saints are the keys that open and shut the natural clouds, and cause them either to give out or withhold their influences. James v. 17, 18. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it

rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." God thus subjected the works of his hands to the prayers of the saints. Isa. xlv. 11.

Prayer is also the golden key which opens these mystical gospel clouds, and dissolves them into sweet gracious showers. God will have the whole work of the ministry carried on by the prayers of his people—they first obtain their ministers by prayer. Luke x. 2. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the vineyard." It is by the help of prayer that they are carried on and enabled to exercise their ministry: They may tell their people as a great general once told his soldiers, "That he flew upon their wings." "Pray for me," saith the great apostle, "that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mysteries of the gospel." Eph. vi. 19. Yea, by the saints' prayers it is that ministers obtain the success and fruits of their labors. 2 Thess. iii. 1. "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified even as it is with you. And thus you have the metaphor opened. Now, O that these truths might come down in sweet showers upon the hearts both of *ministers* and *people* in the following reflections!

REFLECTIONS.

Three reflections for gospel ministers.

1. Am I then a cloud? And is my doctrine as rain to water the Lord's inheritance? And yet do I think it much to be tossed up and down by the furious winds and storms of persecution? Do not I see the clouds above me in continual motions and agi-

? And shall I dream of a fixed, settled state? No; eachers, who are clouds without rain, are more to enjoy that than I am. Which of all the prophets ot been tossed and hurried worse than I? Acts vii. e that will not let men alone to be quiet in their nust expect but little quiet from men in this life. is enough, Lord, that a rest remaineth for thy ser- let me be so wise as to secure a rest to come, and rain to expect it on earth.

, O that I might study those instructing clouds, from as from the bottles of heaven, God pours down ling showers to quench and satisfy the thirsty In this may I resemble them, and come amongst ople of the Lord, "in the fulness of the blessing of spel of Christ." Rom. xv. 29. O let not those souls that wait for me as for the rain, Job. xxix. return like the troops of Tema, ashamed, with eads covered." Job vi. 9. O that my lips might many? Let me never be like those empty clouds deceive the hopes of thirsty souls; but let my e descend as the rain, and distil as the dew, and plot of thine inheritance, which thou hast assigned be as a field which the Lord hath blessed.

nce more, lift up thine eyes to the clouds and be- how great an height the sun hath mounted them; reason of their sublimity it is that they are called *uds of heaven*. Matt. xxiv. 30. Lord, let me be a of heaven too: Let my heart and conversation be ere! Who is more advantaged for an heavenly an I? Heavenly truths are the subjects of my udy, and shall earthly things be the objects of my elights and loves? God forbid that ever my earth- rersation should contradict and shame my heavenly

calling and profession. Shine forth, thou glorious righteousness, and my heart shall quickly be attract mounted above these visible clouds, yea, and abo aspectable heavens.

1. Is the gospel rain, and are its ministers clouds is me then, that my habitation is upon the mountains of Gilboa, where there are no dews! Ah sad lot! that I should be like Gideon's dry fleece, whilst the ground round about me is wet with the dew of heaven: O thou that commandest the above, and openest the windo heaven, remember and refres parched wilderness, wherein with showers of grace, that we n be as the heath in the desart, seeth not when good cometh, nor inhabit the parch ces of the wilderness.

Three refl tians.

For those that want a gospel ministry.

2. O Lord, thou hast caused the heavens above be black with clouds, thou openest t lestial casements from above, and sendest down showers of gospel ble O that I might be as the parched ea der them! not for barrenness, b thriftiness. Let me say, *My soul longeth, yea, even eth for the courts of the Lord*, that I might there s beauty of the Lord. Doth the spongy earth so g suck up the showers, and open as many mouths a are clefts in it, to receive what the clouds dispense shall those precious soul-enriching showers fleet unprofitably from me? If so, then

For those that enjoy a gospel ministry.

For unprofitable hearers.

3. What an account have I to make those gospel blessings that I have enj

r all those gospel dews and showers wherewith I have
en watered! Should I be found fruitless at last, it will
e better with the barren and uncultivated wilderness
an with me; more tolerable for Indians and barbarians,
at never heard the gospel, than for me that have been
assiduously and plenteously watered by it! Lord!
hat a difference wilt thou put in the great day betwixt
mple and pertinacious barrenness? Surely, if my root
e not rottenness, such heavenly waterings and influen-
s as these will make it sprout forth into fruits of obe-
ence.

THE POEM.

THE vegetables here below depend
pon those treasures which the heavens do spend
ost bounteously upon them, to preserve
heir being and their beauty. This may serve
a shadow forth a heavenly mystery,
hich thus presents itself before your eye.
when the sun draws near us in the spring,
l creatures do rejoice, birds chirp and sing;
he face of nature smiles; the fields adorn
hemselves with rich embroideries; the corn
evives and shooteth up; the warm sweet rain
akes trees and herbs sprout forth and spring amain.
alk but the fields in such a fragrant morn,
ow do the birds your ears with music charm!
he flowers their flaming beauties do present
to your captive eyes; and for their scent,
he sweet Arabian gums cannot compare,
hich thus *perfume the* circumambient air.

So, when the gospel sheds its cheering beams
On gracious souls, like those sweet warming gleams
Which God ordains in nature, to draw forth
The virtue seminal that's in the earth;
It warms their hearts, their languid graces cheers
And on such souls a spring-like face appears.
The gracious showers these spiritual clouds do yield,
Enriches them with sweetness, like a field
Which God hath bless'd. Oh! 'tis exceeding sweet,
When gracious hearts and heavenly truths do meet!
How should the hearts of saints within them spring,
When they behold the messengers that bring
These gladsome tidings? Yea, their very feet
Are beautiful, because their message sweet.
O what a mercy do those souls enjoy,
On whom such gospel dews fall day by day!
Thrice happy land! which in this pleasant spring
Can hear these turtles in her hedges sing!
O prize such mercies! If you ask me why,
Read on, you'll see there's reason by and by.

CHAPTER X.

UPON A DEARTH THROUGH WANT OF RAIN.

If God restrains the showers, you howl and cry:
Shall saints not mourn when spiritual clouds are dry?

OBSERVATION.

It is deservedly accounted a sad judgment, when God shuts up the heavens over our heads, and makes the earth as brass under our feet. Deut. xxviii. 23. The

e husbandmen are called to mourning. Joel i. 11. All e fields do languish, and the bellowing cattle are pined ith thirst. Such a sad state the prophet rhetorically escribes. Jer. xiv. 3, 4, 5, 6. "The nobles have sent eir little ones to the waters; they came to the pits and ound no water; they returned with their vessels empty; hey were ashamed and confounded, and covered their eads, because the ground is chapt; for there was no ain in the earth; the ploughmen were ashamed, they overed their heads; yea, the hind also calved in the eld, and forsook it, because there was no grass; and the ild asses did stand in the high places; they snuffed up e wind like dragons; their eyes failed because there as no grass."

And that which makes the want of rain so terrible a dgment, is the famine of bread which necessarily fols these extraordinary droughts, and is one of the sort temporal judgments which God inflicts upon the world.

APPLICATION.

And truly as much cause have they to weep and trem-e, over whose souls God shuts up the spiritual clouds the gospel, and thereby sends a spiritual famine upon eir souls. Such a judgment the Lord threatens in Amos ii. 11. "Behold the day is come, saith the Lord, that will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, r a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the rd." The meaning is, I will send a more fearful judgnt than that of the famine of bread; for this particle t] is not *exclusive*, but *excessive;* implying that a famof bread is nothing, or but a light judgment compared h the famine of the word. Parallel to which is that t, Isa. v. 6. "I will lay it waste," saith God of the itless church, "it shall not be pruned nor digged;

but there shall come up briars and thorns: I w
command the clouds that they rain not upon it.'
we find, both in human and sacred histories, th
God hath shut up the spiritual clouds, removing o
ing his ministers, sensible Christians have ev
deeply affected with it, and reckoned it a most
dous judgment. Thus the Christians of Antioc
Chrysostom their minister was banished, * they j
better to lose the sun out of the firmament, than
their minister. And when Nazianzen was ta
leave of Constantinople, as he was preaching his
sermon, the people were exceedingly affected
loss; and among the rest an old man in the cong
fell into a bitter passion and cried out, *Aude, pat
cum trinitatem ipsam ejice;* (*i. e.*) Go, father,
dare, and take away the whole Trinity with you
ing, that God would not stay when he was gone
did the Christians of Ephesus also weep and lame
Paul was taking his farewell of them? Acts xx.
He had been a cloud of blessings to that place,
they must expect no more showers from him. O
knew not how to give up such a minister!—W
ark of God, which was the symbol of the divine
among the Jews, was taken, "all the city cri
1 Sam. iv. 13. Oh! the loss of a gospel minis
inestimable loss, not to be repaired but by its ow
or by heaven! Mr. Greenham tells us, that in t
of popish persecution, when godly ministers wer
away from their flocks to martyrdom, the poo
tians would meet them in the way to the prisons,

* It is better for us to want the light of the sun, than t
ing of Chrysostom.

with their little ones in their arms, and throwing themselves at their feet, would thus bespeak them: "What shall be our estate now you are gone to martyrdom? Who shall instruct these poor babes? Who shall ease our afflicted consciences? Who shall lead us in the way of life? Recompence unto them, O Lord, as they have deserved, who are the causes of this: Lord, give them bad hearts." *Quis talia fando temperet a lachrymis?* And to let you see there is sufficient ground for this sorrow, when God restrains the influences of the gospel, solemnly consider the following particulars:

1. That it is a dreadful token of God's great anger against that people from whom he removes the gospel. The anger of God was fearfully incensed against the church of Ephesus, when he did but threaten to come against her, and remove the candlestick out of its place. Rev. ii. 5. It is a stroke at the soul, a blow at the root; usually the last, and therefore the worst of judgments. There is a pedigree of judgments; first, Gomer bears Jezreel; next Lo-ruhama, and at last brings forth Lo-ammi. Hosea i. 4, 6, 8, 9.

2. There is cause of mourning, if you consider the deplorable estate in which all the unregenerate souls are left after the gospel is removed from them. What will become of these? or by whom will they be gathered? It made the bowels of Christ yearn within him, when he looked upon the scattered multitude that had no shepherd. Matt. ix. 36. What an easy conquest doth the devil now make of them? How fast doth hell fill in such times? Poor souls being driven thither in droves, and none to rescue them! Matthew Paris tells us, that in the year 1073, when preaching was suppressed at Rome, letters were then framed as coming from hell;

wherein the devil gave them thanks for the multitu souls they had sent to him that year. But truly we not talk of letters from hell, we are told from h how deplorable is the condition of such poor souls. Prov. xxviii. 19. Hos. iv. 6. Or,

3. The judgment will yet appear very heavy, i consider the loss which God's own people sustain b removal of the gospel; for therein they lose (1.) chief glory. Rom. iii. 2. The principal thing in the peculiar glory of Israel consisted was this, "*unto them were committed the oracles of God.*" O account it was called "the glorious land." Dan. This made them greater than all the nations round them. Deut. iv. 7. 8. (2.) By losing the ordi they lose their quickenings, comforts and soul re ments; for all these are sweet streams from the fountain. Psalm cxix. 50. Col. iv. 8. No wonde to hear the people of God complain of dead hearts the gospel is removed. (3.) In the loss of the they lose their defence and safety. This is their h their wall of protection. Isa. v. 5. Walls and h saith *Musculus in loc.* are the ordinances of God, served both *ad separationem et munitionem*, to distin and to defend them. When God plucks up this h and breaks down this wall, all mischiefs break in up presently. 2 Chron. xv. 3, 4, 5, 6. "Now for a season Israel hath been without the true God, and wi a teaching priest, and without law. And in those there was no peace to him that went out, nor to hin came in, but great vexations were upon all the inh ants of the countries, and nation was destroyed of n and city of city; for God did vex them with all adver How long did Jerusalem remain after that voice

in the temple, *Migremus hinc?* Let us begone? With the gospel we lose our temporal enjoyments eature comforts. These usually come and go with spel. When God had once written *Lo-ammi* upon the next news was this, "I will recover my wool y flax." Hosea ii. 9. (5.) And lastly, to come up very case in hand, they lose with it their spiritual nd soul subsistence, for the gospel is their "feast hings," Isa. xxv. 6. their spiritual wells, Isa. xii. 3. distributed among the Lord's poor, Rom. i. 11. ord, it is as the rain and dews of heaven, as hath shown, which being restrained, a spiritual famine arily follows, a famine, of all the most terrible. o shew you the analogy between this and a tempo- ine, that therein you may see what cause you have leeply affected with it, take it in these six following ulars:

A famine caused by the failing of bread, or that is in the stead, and hath the use of bread. Dain- d superfluous rarities may fail, and yet we may sub- nfortably. As long as people have bread and water ill not famish; but take away bread once, and the of man faileth. Upon this account bread is called Psalm cv. 16. because what a staff is to an aged ble man, that bread is to the faint and feeble spi- hich even so do lean upon it. And look what bread he natural spirits, that, and more than that, the is to gracious spirits. Job xxiii. 12. "I have es- d the words of thy mouth more than my necessary

If once God breaks this staff, the inner man, idden man of the heart, will quickly begin to fail alter.

It is not every degree of scarcity of bread that pre-

sently makes a famine, but a general failing of it, whe bread is to be had, or that which yields no nutrin For a famine may as well be occasioned by God's ta away *panis nutrimentum*, the nourishing virtue of bi that it should signify no more, as to the end of bread, a chip, Hag. i. 6. as by taking away *panem nutrimen* bread itself, Isa. iii. i. And so it is in a spiritual fan which is occasioned either by God's removing all ordinances, and making vision utterly to fail, or though there be preaching, prayer, and other ordina left, at least the names and shadows of them, yet the sence of God is not with them. There is no marro the bone, no milk in the breast; and so, as to a soul sistence, it is all one, as if there were no such things

3. In a corporeal famine, mean and coarse things bec sweet and pleasant. Famine raises the price and est of them. That which before you would have throw your dogs, now goes down pleasantly with yourse "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." P xxvii. 7. It is the Dutch proverb, and a very true *hunger is the best cook.**

"In time of famine coarsest fare contents,
The barking stomach strains no compliments."

It is storied of Artaxerxes Memor, that when he flying before his enemies, he fed hungrily upon bar bread and said, *Cujusmodi voluptatis hactenus inexpe fui!* O what pleasure have I hitherto been ignorant —When great Darius drank the puddled water that been defiled with dead carcases, which had been slai that famous battle, he professed he never drank a pleasant drink. And famous Hunniades said, he ne

* Jejunus stomachus raro vulgaria temnit.—HORAT.

fared more daintily, than when, in a like exigence, he supped upon bread, onions and water, with a poor shepherd in his cottage.

Just so does the famine of the word raise the price and esteem of vulgar and despised truths. Oh! what would you give for one of those sermons, one of those sabbaths we formerly enjoyed! *In those days the word of the Lord was precious.* When God calls to the enemy to take away and remove his contemned, but precious dainties, from his wanton children, and a spiritual famine hath a little pinched them, they will then learn to prize their spiritual food at a higher rate.

4. In time of famine some persons suffer more than others; it falls heaviest, and pinches hardest upon the poorer sort; as long as any thing is to be had for money, the rich will have it. So it falls out in a spiritual famine; although the most experienced and the best furnished Christians will have enough to do to live in the absence of ordinances, yet they are like to subsist much better than weak, ignorant and inexperienced ones. Some Christians have husbanded their time well, and, like Joseph in the seven years' *plenty*, laid up for a *scarcity*. The word of God dwells richly in them. Some such there are, as John calls young men, who are strong, and the word of God remaineth in them; of whom it may be said, as Jerom spake of Nepotianus, that by long and assiduous meditation of the scriptures, he had made his breast the very library of Christ. But others are babes in Christ, and though God will preserve that good work which he hath begun in them, yet these poor babes will soonest find and be most concerned in the loss of their spiritual fathers and nurses.

5. In time of famine there are pitiful cries and heart-

breaking complaints wherever you go. Oh! the many pale faces you shall then see, and the sad language that rings in your ears in every place! One cries, bread, bread, for Christ's sake! one bit of bread! Another faints and falls down at your door! "All her people sigh." Lam. i. 11. Yea, the poor little ones are brought in, ver. 12, crying to their mothers, Where is the corn and wine? and then pouring out their souls into their mothers' bosom. Just so it is in a famine of the word; poor Christians every where sighing and crying, Oh, where are our godly ministers? our sweet sabbaths, sermons, sacraments? My fathers! my fathers! the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof! How beautiful were your feet upon the mountains! And then, weeping like the people at Paul's departure, to think they shall see their faces no more.

6. Lastly, In time of famine there is nothing so costly or precious but the people will part with it to purchase bread.—"They have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve their souls." Lam. i. 11. And, doubtless, when a spiritual famine shall pinch hard, those that have been close-handed to maintain a gospel ministry, will account it a choice mercy to enjoy them again at any rate. "Though the Lord feed you with the bread of affliction and give you the waters of adversity, yet it will sweeten that bread and water to you, if your teachers be no more removed into corners." Isa. xxx. 20.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Is the famine of the word such a fearful judgment? Then Lord pardon my unthankfulness, for the plentiful and long continued enjoyment *The ungrate-* of such a precious and invaluable mercy. *ful soul's re-* How long lightly have I esteemed the great *flection.* *things* of the gospel! O that with eyes and

hands lifted up to heaven, I might bless the Lord, that ever I was brought forth in an age of so much light, in a valley of visions, in a land flowing with gospel mercies! "Hath not God made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth! and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation?" Acts xvii. 26. Many of these great and populous nations are involved in gross darkness. Now, that of all the several ages of the world, and places in it, God should espy the best place for me, and bring me forth in it, in such a happy tide of time, as can hardly be parallelled in history, for the plenty of gospel mercies that this age and nation hath enjoyed; that my mother did not bring me forth in the deserts of Arabia, or wastes of America, but in England, where God hath made the sun of the gospel to stand still, as the natural sun once did over Gibeon; and that such a mercy should no more affect my soul, let shame cover my face for this, and trembling seize my heart!

2. Is the gospel indeed departed? its sweet influences restrained? and a famine worse than that of bread come upon us? *Alas for the day! The deprived for it is a great day, so that none is like it; Christian's reflection.* it is even the day of Jacob's trouble! Woe is me, that ever I should survive the gospel, and the precious liberties and mercies of it! What horrid sins have been harbored amongst us, for which the Lord contends by such an unparrelled judgment? Lord, let me justify thee, even in this severe dispensation; the provocation of thy sons and of thy daughters has been very great, and amongst them none greater than mine. May we not this day read our sin in our punishment? O what nice and wanton appetites, what curious and itching

ears had thy people in the days of plenty! Method tones and gestures were more regarded than the excellent treasures of divine truths. Ah, my soul! I remember my fault this day; little did I then consider that sermons work not upon hearts, as they are thus elegant, admirable, but as they are instruments in the hand of God appointed to such an end. Even as Austin said of the conduits of water, though one be in the shape of an angel another of a beast, yet the water refreshes as it is water and not as it comes from such a conduit: by this also, O Lord, thou rebukest the supineness and formality of thy people. How drowsy, dull and careless have they been under the most excellent and quickening means? Few more than I. Alas! I have often presented my body before the Lord in ordinances, *e de psuche exo*, but my soul hath been wandering abroad, as Chrysostom speaks. I should have come from under every sermon as a shoe comes from the press, with all the stamps and lively impressions of the truths I have heard upon my heart. But alas! if it had been demanded of me, as once it was of Aristotle, after a long and curious oration, how he liked it? I might have answered, as he did, truly I did not hear it; for I was all the while minding another matter. Righteous art thou, O Lord, in all that is come upon us!

The silent minister's reflection.

3. I am now as a spring shut up, that can yield no refreshment to thirsty souls, ready to perish. Thou hast said to me, as once to Ezekiel, "Son of man, behold, I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, and thou shalt be dumb." This is a very heavy judgment; but thou must be justified and cleared in it. Although men may not, yet God, if he please, may put a lighted candle under a bushel; and herein I must

nowledge thy righteousness. Many times have I been ully silent, when both thy glory and the interest of ls engaged me to speak. Most justly, therefore, hast u made my tongue to cleave to its roof. Little did I sider the preciousness of souls, or the tremendous :ount to be given for them, at the appearing of the :at shepherd. I have now time enough to sit down l mourn over former miscarriages and lost opportuni-s. Lord, restore me once again to a serviceable capa-y, to a larger sphere of activity for thee, for I am now :ome as a broken vessel. It grieves me to the heart see thy flock scattered, to hear thy people cry to me, once to Joseph, "Give us bread; for why should we in thy presence?" The word is like fire shut up in bones, and I am weary with forbearing. Oh! that u wouldst once again open the doors of thine house, t there may be bread enough in thine house for all r children.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE CORRUPTION OF THE SEED BEFORE IT SPRINGS.

Seeds die and rot, and then must fresh appear;
Saints' bodies rise more orient than they were.

OBSERVATION.

After the seed is committed to the earth, it seems to rish and die, as our Saviour speaks, John xii. 24. "Ex-pt a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abid-b alone; but if it die, it brings forth much fruit." The

death of the corn in the earth is not a total death, but only the corruption or alteration of it; for if once the seminal life and virtue of it were quite extinguished, it could never put forth blade or ear without a miracle. Yet, because that alteration is a kind of death, therefore Christ here uses it as a fit illustration of the resurrection. And, indeed, there is nothing in nature more apt to illustrate that great mystery. What a fragrant, green and beautiful blade do we see spring up from a corrupted seed! How black and mouldy is that! How beautiful and verdant in this!

APPLICATION.

Even thus shall the bodies of the saints arise in beauty and glory at the resurrection: "They are sown in dishonor, they are raised in glory; they are sown natural bodies, they are raised spiritual bodies." 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44. The husbandman knows, that though the seed rot in the earth, yet it will rise again; and the believer knows, "that though after his skin worms destroy his body, yet in his flesh he shall see God." Job xix. 26, &c. And the resemblance betwixt the seed sown, and springing up, and the bodies of the saints dying, and rising again, lies in these following particulars:

1. The seed is committed to the earth from whence it came, so is the body of a saint; earth it was, and to earth it is again resolved. Grace exempts not the body of the best man from seeing corruption. Rom. viii. 10. Though Christ be in him, yet the body is dead, that is, sentenced to death, because of sin. Heb. ix. 27. "But it is appointed for all men once to die.

2. The seed is cast into the earth in hope. 1 Cor. ix. 10. Were there not a resurrection of it expected, the husbandman would never be willing to cast away his corn. The bodies of saints are also committed to the grave in hope.

1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those which are asleep, as they which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so also them which sleep in Jesus shall the Lord bring with him." This blessed hope of a resurrection sweetens not only the troubles of life, but the pangs of death.

3. The seed is cast into the earth seasonably, in its proper season; so are the bodies of the saints. Job v. 26. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, as a shock of corn cometh in, in its season." They always die in the fittest time, though sometimes they seem to die immaturely; the time of their death was, from all eternity, prefixed by God, beyond which they cannot go, and short of which they cannot come.

4. The seed lies many days and nights under the clods, before it rises and appears again; "even so man lieth down, and riseth not again until the heavens be no more." Job xiv. 12. The days of darkness in the grave are many.

5. When the time is come for its shooting up, the earth that covered it can hide it no longer; it cannot keep it down a day more; it will find or make way through the clods. So in that day, when the great trump shall sound, bone shall come to its bone, and the grave shall not be able to hold them a minute longer. Both sea and earth must render up the dead that are in them. Rev. xx. 13.

6. When the seed appears above ground, it appears much more fresh and orient than when it was cast into the earth: God cloaths it with such beauty, that it is not like to what it was before. Thus rise the bodies of the saints, marvellously improved, beautified, and perfected with spiritual qualities and rich endowments, in respect whereof they are called spiritual bodies, 1 Cor. xv. 43. not pro-

perly but analogically spiritual; for look, as spirits subsist without food, raiment, sleep, know no lassitude, weariness or pain, so our bodies, after the resurrection, shall be above these necessities and distempers; for we shall be as the angels of God. Mat. xxii. 30. Yea, our vile bodies shall be changed, and made like unto Christ's glorious body, which is the highest pitch and ascent of glory and honor that an human body is capable of. Phil. iii. 21. Indeed the glory of the soul shall be the greatest glory; that is, the orient invaluable gem: But God will bestow a distinct glory upon the body, and richly enamel the very case in which that precious jewel shall be kept. In that glorious morning of the resurrection, the saints shall put on their new fresh suits of flesh, richly laid and trimmed with glory. Those bodies, which in the grave were but dust and rottenness, when it delivers them back again, shall be shining and excellent pieces, absolutely and everlastingly freed; (1.) From all natural infirmities and distempers: Death is their good physician, which at once frees them of all diseases. It is a great affliction now to many of the Lord's people, to be clogged with so many bodily infirmities, which render them very unserviceable to God. *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* A crazy body retorts and shoots back its distempers upon the soul, with which it is so closely conjoined; But though now the soul, as Theophrastus speaks, pays a dear rent for the tabernacle in which it dwells; yet, when death dissolves that tabernacle, all the diseases and pains, under which it groaned, shall be buried in the rubbish of its mortality; and when they come to be re-united again, God will bestow rich gifts and dowries, even upon the body, in the day of its re-espousals to the soul. (2.) It shall be freed from all deformities; there are no breaches, flaws,

rosities in glorified bodies ; but of them it may much be said, what was once said of Absalom. 2 Sam. xiv. That from the crown of his head to the sole of his iere was no blemish in him." (3.) It shall be freed ll natural necessities, to which it is now subjected its animal state. How is the soul now disquieted rtured with cares and troubles, to provide for a ing body ? Many unbelieving and unbecoming fears w vexed with : What shall it eat ? And what shall k ? And wherewithal shall it be cloathed ? " But for the belly, and the belly for meats, God shall de- oth it and them," 1 Cor. vi. 13. (*i. e.*) as to their t use and office ; for as to its existence, so the belly ot be destroyed. But even as the masts, poop and f a ship abide in the harbor, after the voyage is so shall these bodily members, as Tertullian ex- ly illustrates it. (4.) They shall be freed from to which thenceforth they can be subject no more formidable adversary of nature shall assault it no —" For they which shall be accounted worthy to ob- at world, and the resurrection from the dead, nei- arry, nor are given in marriage ; neither can they more, for they shall be equal to the angels, and are ldren of God, being the children of the resurrec- Luke xx. 35, 36. Mark it, *equal to the angels ;* t they shall be separate and single spirits, without as the angels are, but equal to them in the way and of their living and acting.* We shall then live od, and act freely, purely and delightfully for God ; kind of living upon, and delighting in creatures, in that text, by a synecdoche of the part which is ily in scripture put for all creature-delights, de-

* *Isangelos biontes.*

pendencies and necessities, to be excluded. Nothing God shall enamour and fill the soul, and the body be perfectly subdued to the spirit. Lord, what hast prepared for them that love thee!

REFLECTIONS.

1. If I shall receive my body again so dignified and proved in the world to come, then, Lord, let me never be unwilling to use my body now for the interest of thy glory, or my own salvation! Now, O my God, it grieves me to think how many precious opportunities of serving and honouring thee I have lost, under pretence of endangering my health?

The heavenly saint's reflection.

I have been more solicitous to live long and healthy than to live usefully and fruitfully; and, like enough, life had been more serviceable to thee, if it had not been so fondly over-valued by me.

Foolish soul! hath God given thee a body for a tool or instrument, and art thou afraid to use it? What is the mercy of having a body, if not in spending and wearing it out in the service of God? To have an active vigorous body, and not to employ and exercise it for God, for fear of endangering its health, is, as if one should give a handsome and sprightly horse, upon condition that thou shouldest not ride or work him. O! if some of the saints had enjoyed the blessing of such an healthy, active body as mine, what excellent services would they have performed to God in it?

2. If my body shall as surely rise again in glory, and excellent endowments, as the seed which I sow doth; why should not this comfort over all the pains, weaknesses and deformities with which my soul is now clogged? God knowest, my God, what a grief it hath

The sickly saint's reflection.

o my soul, to be fettered and entangled with the distem-
ers and manifold indispositions of this vile body; It hath
ade me sigh, and say, with holy Anselme, when he saw
he mounting bird weighed down by the stone hanging at
er leg, Lord, thus it fares with the soul of thy servant!
ain would I serve, glorify and enjoy thee, but a distem-
ered body will not let me. However, it is reviving to
ink, that though I am now forced to crawl like a worm,
the discharge of my duties, I shall shortly fly, like a
raphim, in the execution of thy will. Cheer up, droop-
g soul, the time is at hand, when thou shalt be made
ore willing than thou art, and thy flesh not so weak as
ow it is.

The dying saint's reflection.

3. And is it so indeed? Then let the dying saint, like Jacob, rouse up himself upon his bed, and encourage himself against the fears of death by this refreshing consideration. Let him say, with holy dying Muscus, why tremblest thou, O my soul, to go forth of this tabernacle to the land of rest? Hath thy body been such a pleasant habitation to thee, that thou shouldst be so loth to part with it, though but for a time, and with assurance of receiving it again with such a glorious improvement? know, O my soul, that thou hast a natural inclination to is body, resulting from the dear and strict union which od himself hath made betwixt thee and it; yea, even e holiest of men do sometimes sensibly feel the like in emselves; but beware thou love it not immoderately or ordinately; it is but a creature, how dear soever it be thee; yea, a fading creature, and that which now stands thy way to the full enjoyment of God. But say, my ul, why are the thoughts of parting with it so burthen-me to thee? *Why so loth* to take death by its cold hand?

Is this body thy old and dear friend? True, but yet t
partest not with it upon such sad terms, as should dese
a tear at parting: For mayest thou not say of this dep
ure, as Paul at the departure of Onesimus? Philem. 1
15. "It therefore departeth for a season, that thou n
est receive it for ever." The day of re-espousals
quickly come; and in the mean time, as thy body s
not be sensible of the tedious length of interposing ti
so neither shalt thou be solicitous about thine ab
friend; for the fruition of God in thine unbodied st
shall fill thee with infinite satisfaction and rest.

Or is it not so much simply for parting with it, as for
manner of thy parting, either by the slow and linge
approaches of a natural, or the quick and terrible
proaches of a violent death. Why, trouble not th
about that; for if God lead thee through the long
lane of a tedious sickness, yet at the end of it is thy fath
house. And for a violent death, it is not so mate
whether friends or enemies stand weeping or triump
over thy dead body. *Nihil corpus sensit in nervo anima fit in cœlo.* When thy soul shall be in heave
will not be sensible how the body is used on earth.

4 But, Oh! what an uncomfortable parting will
be! and how much more sad our meeting
again! How will this soul and body blush, *The ung*
yea, tremble when they meet, who have *soul's re*
been co-partners in so much guilt? I dam- *tion.*
ned my soul to please my flesh, and now
have ruined both thereby. Had I denied my flesh to s
Christ, worn out my body in the service of my soul, I
thereby, happily provided for them both, but I begu
the wrong end, and so have ruined both eternally.

CHAPTER XII.

)N THE RESEMBLANCE OF WHEAT AND TARES.

As wheat resembled is by viler tares,
So vile hypocrisy like grace appears.

OBSERVATION.

r is Jerom's observation, that wheat and tares are so h alike in their first springing up, that it is exceeding :ult to distinguish the one from the other: These are words, *Inter triticum et lolium quamdiu herba est, et lum culmus venit ad spicam, grandis similitudo est; et scerυendo aut nulla, aut per difficilis distantia.* The rence, saith he, between them, is either none at all, or derfully difficult to discern, which those words of ist, Mat. xiii. 30. plainly confirm. Let them both e till the harvest, thereby intimating, both the diffi- y of distinguishing the tares and wheat, as also the un- antable rashness of bold and hasty censures of men's erity or hypocrisy, which are there shadowed by them.

APPLICATION.

ow difficult soever it be to discern the difference be- t wheat and tares, yet, doubtless, the eye of sense can h easier discriminate them, than the most quick and cing eye of man can discern the difference betwixt ial and common grace; for all saving graces in the s have their counterfeits in hypocrites. There are lar *works* in these, which a spiritual and very judi- s eye may easily mistake for the *saving and genuine* s of the sanctifying Spirit.

oth the Spirit of God convince the consciences of his le of the evil of sin? Rom. vii. 9. Hypocrites have convictions too. Exod. x. 16. "Then Pharaoh

called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I hav sinned against the Lord your God, and against you." Th was Saul also convicted. 1 Sam. xv. 24.

Doth true conviction and compunction work reform tion of life in the people of God? Even hypocrites al have been famous for their reformations. The unclea spirit often goes out of the formal hypocrite and exter reformation, and yet still retains his property in the Mat. xii. 43, 44; for that departure is, indeed, no mo than a politic retreat. Many that shall never escape t damnation of hell, have yet escaped the pollutions of t world, and that by the knowledge of the Son of Go 2 Pet. ii. 21.

Doth the Spirit of the Lord produce that glorious a super-natural work of faith in convinced and humble soul In this also the hypocrite apes and imitates the believ Acts viii. 13. "Then Simon himself believed also Luke viii. 13. "These are they which for a while believ and in time of temptation fall away."

Doth the precious eye of faith, discovering the tr scendent excellencies that are in Christ, inflame the fections of the believing soul with vehement desires a longings after him? Strange motions of heart have a been found in hypocrites towards Christ and heave things. John vi. 34. "Lord, evermore give us this brea Mat. xxv. 8. "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are g out." With what a rapture was Balaam transport when he said, "Let me die the death of the righteo and my last end be like his!" Numb. xxiii. 10.

Doth the work of faith, in some believers, bear upon top branches, the full ripe fruit of a blessed assuranc Lo! what strong confidence, and high built persuasi of an interest in God, have sometimes been found eve

ied ones? John viii. 54. "Of whom you say,
s your God, and yet ye have not known him."—
ame height of confidence arrived those vain souls,
d in Rom. ii. 19. Yea, so strong may this false
e be, that they dare boldly venture to go to the
seat of God, and there defend it. Mat. vii. 22.
ord, have we not phrophesied in thy name?"
he Spirit of God fill the heart of the assured be-
h joy unspeakable and full of glory, giving them,
aith, a prelibation, or foretaste of heaven itself,
irst fruits of it? How near to this comes that
e *apostle* supposes may be found even in *apos-*
b. vi. 8, 9. who are there said *to taste the good*
od, and powers of the world to come. What shall
real Christians delight in ordinances, those that
may also delight in approaching to God. Ezek.
. It may be you will say, though the difference
sily discernible in their active obedience, yet,
all come to suffering there every eye may dis-
ie false heart shall then flinch, and cannot brook
. And yet even this is no infallible rule neither,
ostle supposes, that the *salamander* of hypocri-
e in the very flames of martrydom. 1 Cor. xiii.
give my body to be burnt, and have not charity."
i long since determined in this case, *Non pœna, facit martyrem;* so that without controversy,
lty of distinguishing them is very great.
s difference will yet be more subtle and undis-
f I should tell you, that as in so many things the
resembles the saint, so there are other things
real Christian may act too like an hypocrite.
find a Pharaoh confessing, and Herod practising,
hearing a Judas preaching Christ, and Alexan-

der venturing his life for Paul; and, on the other side, shall find a David condemning that in another which he practised himself, an Hezekiah glorying in his riches, a Peter dissembling, and even all the disciples forsaking Christ in an hour of trouble and danger. O then! how hard is it for the eye of man to discern betwixt chaff and wheat? How many upright hearts are now censured, whom God will clear? How many false hearts are now approved, whom God will condemn? Men ordinarily have no clear convictive proofs, but only probable symptoms; which, at most, can beget but a conjectural knowledge of another's state. And they that shall peremptorily judge either way, may possibly wrong the generation of the upright; or, on the other side, absolve and justify the wicked. And truly, considering what has been said, it is no great wonder that dangerous mistakes are so frequently made in this matter. But though man cannot, the Lord both can and will perfectly discriminate them. "The Lord knoweth who are his." 2 Tim. ii. 19. He will have a day perfectly to sever the tares from the wheat, to melt off the varnish of the most resplendent and refined hypocrite, and to blow off the ashes of infirmities, which have covered and obscured the very sparks of sincerity in his people: He will make such a division as was never yet made in the world, how many divisions soever there have been in it. *And then shall men indeed return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; betwixt him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.* Mean while, my soul, thou canst not better employ thyself, whether thou be sound or unsound, than in making these reflections upon thyself.

REFLECTIONS.

And is this so? Then, Lord, pardon the rashness and

precipitancy of my censorious spirit; for I have often boldly anticipated thy judgment, and assumed thy prerogative, although thou hast said, "Why dost thou judge thy brother? And why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written—As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more." Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 12, 13. And again, "He that judgeth me is the Lord. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God." 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5.

The censorious soul's reflection.

What if God will own some of them for his sons, to whom I refuse to give the respect of brethren? I may pass hasty and headlong censures upon others, but where is my commission for so doing? I want not only a commission, but fit qualifications for such a work as this. Can I pierce into the heart as God? Can I infallibly discover the hidden motives, ends and principles of actions? Besides, O my soul, thou art conscious of so much falseness in thyself, that were there no other consideration, that alone might restrain thee from all uncharitable and hasty censures. If others knew but what I know of myself, would they not judge as severely of me as I do of others?

2. Though I may not judge the final state of another, yet I may, and ought to judge the state of my own soul; which is, doubtless, a more necessary and concerning work to me. For since every saving grace in a Christian hath its counterfeit in the hypocrite,

The presumptuous soul's reflection.

how needful is it for thee, O my soul, to make a stand here, and solemnly to ponder this question—Whether those things, whereon I depend, as my best evidences for the life to come, be the real, or only the common works of the Spirit? Whether they may be such as can now endure the test of the word, and abide a fair trial at the bar of my own conscience?

Come then, my soul, set the Lord before thee, to whom the secrets of all hearts are manifest; and in the awful sense of that great day, make true answering to these heart discovering queries: for though thou canst not discern the difference betwixt these things in another, yet thou mayest and oughtest to discern it in thyself: For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him.

1. Is my obedience uniform? Am I the same man at all times, places and companies? Or rather, am I not exact and curious in open and public, remiss and careless in private and secret duties? Sincere souls are uniform souls. Psalm cxix. 6. The hypocrite is no closet man. Matt. vi. 5.

2. Doth that which I call grace in me oppose and mortify, or doth it not rather quietly consist with and protect my lusts and corruptions? True grace tolerates no lust, Gal. v. 17; no, not the bosom darling corruptions. Psal. xviii. 23.

3. Doth that which I call my grace, humble, empty and abase my soul? Or rather, doth it not puff it up with self-conceitedness? All saving grace is humbling grace. 1 Cor. xv. 10. "But the soul which is lifted up is not upright." Hab. ii. 4.

Lastly, Canst thou, my soul, rejoice and bless God for the grace imparted to others? And rejoice if any design

for Christ be carried on in the world by other hands? Or rather, dost thou not envy those that excel thee, and carest for no work in which thou art not seen?

But stay, my soul, it is enough: If these be the substantial differences betwixt special and common grace, I more than doubt I shall not endure the day of his coming, "whose fan is in his hand." Do not those spots appear upon me, which are not the spots of his children? Woe is me, poor wretch! the characters of death are upon my soul! Lord, add power to the form, life to the name to live, practice to the knowledge, or I perish eternally! O rather give me the *saint's heart* than the *angel's tongue*; the poorest breathing of the Spirit, than the richest ornaments of common gifts! Let me never deceive myself, or others, in matters of so deep and everlasting consequence.

CHAPTER XIII.

UPON THE DANGERS INCIDENT TO THE CORN FROM SEED-TIME TO HARVEST.

Fowls, weeds and blastings do your corn annoy;
Even so corruptions would your grace destroy.

OBSERVATION.

THERE are, amongst many others, three critical and and dangerous periods between the seed-time and harvest. The first, when corn is newly committed to the earth, all that lies uncovered is quickly picked up by the birds, and much of that which is but slightly covered is plucked up, as soon as it begins to sprout, by rooks and

other devouring fowls. Matt. xiii. 4. But if it escape the fowls, and get root in the earth, yet then it is hazarded by noxious weeds, which purloin and suck away its nourishment, whilst it is yet in the tender blade. If, by the care of the vigilant husbandman, it be freed from choaking weeds, yet lastly, as great a danger as any of the former still attends it; for oftentimes, whilst it is blowing in the ear, blastings and mildews smite in the stalk, and cut off the juice and sap that should ascend to nourish the ear, and so shrivels and dries up the grain whilst it is yet immature, whereby it becomes like those ears of corn in Pharaoh's vision, which were thin and blasted with the east wind, or like the ears the Psalmist speaks of upon the housetop, wherewith the reaper filleth not his arms.

APPLICATION.

True grace, from the infancy to the perfection thereof, conflicts with far greater dangers, amongst which it answerably meets with three dangerous periods, which marvellously hazard it; so that it is a much greater wonder that it ever arrives at its just perfection. For, (1.) no sooner hath the Great Husbandman disseminated these holy seeds in the regenerate heart, but multitudes of impetuous corruptions immediately assault, and would certainly devour them, like the fowls of the air, did not the same arm that sowed them also protect them. It fares with grace as with Christ its author, whom Herod sought to destroy in his very infancy. The new creature is scarce warm in its seat before it must fight to defend itself. This conflict is excellently set forth in that famous text, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

ɔh here understand the corruption of nature by ɪin, and the sinful motions thereof; by Spirit, not or natural spirit of man, but the Spirit of God in . those graces in man which are the workman- he Spirit, and therefore called by his name. ɔsition betwixt these two is expressed by lusting, ɛsiring the mutual ruin and destruction of each or even when they are not acting, yet then they ɪg; there is an opposite disposition against each hich opposition is both a *formal* and an *effective* n. There are two contrary forms, two men in ɪnt. Col. iii. 9, 10. From hence an effective n must needs follow; for as things are in their nd principles, so they are in their operations and workings always follow beings; fire and water ɪntrary qualities, and when they meet, they ef- oppose each other. Sin and grace are so oppo- if sin should cease to oppose grace, it would be sin; and if grace should cease to oppose sin, cease to be grace. And this doth much more en- ɪe work of grace than any other enemy it hath, it works against it more *inwardly*, *constantly* and *eously* than any thing else can do. (1.) More , for it hath its being and working in the same re grace dwells; yea, in the self same faculties, not only sets one faculty against another, but the ulty against itself; the understanding against the nding, and the will against the will; so that ye o the good, nor yet the evil that ye would; not that ye would, because when the spirit moveth and beats upon the heart by divine pulsations, it to duty, the flesh crosses and opposes it there; *cannot totally hinder* the performance of a duty,

yet it lames the soul upon the working hand, wherei performance is not so spiritual, free and composed desires ; nor yet the evil that you would commit, if were not there ; because when lust stirs, in its firs tions, grace puts a rub in its way. " How can I c great wickedness and sin against God ?" And if it (which for the most part it doth) hinder the acting yet it so engages the will against it, that it is not cc ted with complacency and full consent. " What I allow not." (2.) It opposes it more constantly—it a continual dropping ; a man can no more fly fro enemy than from himself. There is a time wh devil leaves tempting, Mat. iv. 11. but no time wh ruption ceases from working. And lastly, It o grace more *advantageously* than any other enemy for it is not only always in the same soul with it, bu there naturally ; it hath the advantage of the soil suits with it. And yet, oh the wonder of free grace not swallowed up in victory, but it escapes this hav

But (2.) It soon meets with another, though it e this, even by temptations which strike desperately very life of it ; for these, like the weeds, with see loving embraces, clasp about it ; and did not the God now make a way to escape, instead of a harv should have a heap. For, alas, what are we ! to v with principalities and powers, and spiritual wick in high places ?

the promises of perseverance and victory made to it cannot be frustrated; among which these are excellent. Isa. liv. 10. Jer. xxxiv. 40. 1 Cor. 1. 8. Psalm i. 3.—cxxv. 1. John iv. 15. So that here is matter of unspeakable comfort; though the flesh say, *Ego deficiam*, I will fail thee; though the world say, *Ego decipiam*, I will deceive thee; though the devil say, *Ego eripiam*, I will snatch thee away; yet as long as Christ saith, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, thy graces are secure in the midst of all these enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

1. This soul of mine was once ploughed up by conviction, and sown, as I thought, with the seed of God. In those days many purposes and good resolutions begun to chink and bud forth, promising a blessed harvest; but oh! (with what consternation and horror should I speak it,) the cares and pleasures of this life, the lusts and corruptions of my base heart springing up, have quite destroyed and choaked it; by which it appears it was not the seed of God, as I then imagined it to be; and now my expected harvest shall be an heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow. I had convictions, but they are gone; troubles for sin, conscience of duties, but all is blasted, and my soul is now as a barren field, which God hath cursed.

The apostate's reflections.

Woe is me! I have revolted from God, and now that dreadful word is evidently fulfilled upon me; "for I am like the heath in the desart, that seeth not when good cometh; my soul inhabits the parched places of the wilderness." Alas! all my formal and heartless duties were but as so many scare-crows in the field, which could not defend these slight workings from being devoured by the

infernal fowls. Had these principles been the seed of God, no doubt they would have continued and overcome the world. Wretched soul! thy case is sad; it will be better with the uncultivated wilderness, than with such a miscarrying soul, unless the Great Husbandman plough thee up the second time, and sow thy heart with better seed.

The careless soul's reflection.

And are the corruptions of my heart to grace, what fowls, weeds and mildews are to the corn? O what need have I then to watch my heart, and keep it with all diligence; for in the life of that grace is wrapt up the life of my soul.

He that carries a candle in his hand, in a blustering, stormy night, had need to cover it close, lest it be blown out and he left in darkness. O let me never say, God hath promised it shall persevere, and therefore I need not be so solicitous to preserve it; for as this inference is quite opposite to the nature of true grace and assurance, which never encourage to carelessness, but provoke the soul to an industrious use of means to preserve it; so it is in itself an irrational and senseless conclusion, which will never follow from any scripture promise; for although it is readily granted, that God hath made many comfortable and sweet promises to the grace of his people, yet we must expect to enjoy the benefits and blessings of all those promises in that way and order in which God hath promised them, and that is in the careful and diligent use of those means which he hath prescribed. Ezek. xxxvi. 36, 37. For promises do not exclude, but imply the use of means. I know my life is determined to a day, to an hour, and I shall live out every minute God hath appointed; but yet I am bound to provide food, raiment and physic to preserve it.

conclude, let all doubting Christians reflect seri-
upon this truth, and suck marrow and
out of it to strengthen and establish *The doubting*
gainst all their fears : Your life, your *soul's reflec-*
al life hath for many years hung in *tions.*
se before you, and you have often
ith David, I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul.
nding, trembling soul! lift up thine eyes and look
he fields; the corn lives still and grows up, though
ave watched to devour it; snows have covered it,
have cropped it, weeds have almost choaked it, yet
reserved. And hath not God more care of that
s seed of his own spirit in thee, than any husband-
th in his corn? Hath he not said, "That having
the good work in thee, he will perfect it to the day
st?" Hath he not said, "I give unto them eter-
, and they shall never perish." Hast thou not
imes said, and thought of it, as thou dost now, and
ives? O what matter of unspeakable joy and com-
this to upright souls! Well then, be not discour-
or thou dost not run as one uncertain, nor fight as
t beats the air. But "the foundation of God stands
having this seal—the Lord knows who are his."
h thy grace be weak, thy God is strong; though
eam seem sometimes to fail, yet it is fed by an
wing fountain.

CHAPTER XIV.

UPON THE PATIENCE OF THE HUSBANDMAN FOR THE HARVEST.

Our husbandmen for harvest wait and stay;
O let not any saint do less than they!

OBSERVATION.

The expectation of a good harvest at last makes the husbandman, with untired patience, to digest all his labors. He that ploughs, ploughs in hope. 1 Cor. vi. 10. And they are not so irrational to think they shall presently be partakers of their hope; nor so foolish as to anticipate the harvest, by cutting down their corn before it be fully ripened; but are content to plough, sow and weed it; and when it is fully ripe, then they go forth into their fields, and reap it with joy.

APPLICATION.

Can a little corn cause men to digest so many difficult labors, and make them wait with invincible patience till the reaping time come? Much more should the expectation of eternal glory steel and fortify my spirit against all intercurrent hardships and difficulties. It least of all becomes a Christian to be of a hasty and impatient spirit. "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart." "Behold the husbandman waiteth," &c. "Be patient, therefore, my brethren, for the coming of the Lord draws near." There are three great arguments to persuade Christians to a long-suffering and patient frame under sufferings. (1.) The example of Christ. Isa. liii. 7. To think how quietly he suffered all injuries and difficulties with invincible patience, is

sufficient to shame the best of Christians, who are of such short spirits. I have read of one Elezarius, a nobleman, that when his wife wondered at his exceeding great patience in bearing injuries, he thus answered her, "You know sometimes my heart is ready to burst with indignation against such as wrong me, but I presently begin to think of the wrongs that Christ suffered, and say thus to myself—Although thy servant should pluck thy beard, and smite thee on thy face, this were nothing to what the Lord suffered; he suffered more and greater things; and assure yourself, wife, I never leave off thinking of the injuries done to my Saviour till such time as my mind is still and quiet." To this purpose it was well noted by Bernard, speaking of Christ's humiliation, "Was Christ the Lord of glory thus humbled and emptied of his fulness of glory? And shall such a worm as I swell?" (2.) The desert of sin. "Why doth the living man complain?" It was a good saying of the blessed Greenham, "When in lies heavy, affliction lies light." * And it is a famous instance which Dr. Taylor gives of the Duke of Conde. I have read, saith he, when the Duke of Conde had voluntarily entered into the inconveniences of a religious poverty and retirement, he was one day spied and pitied by a lord of Italy, who, out of tenderness, wished him to be more careful and nutritive of his person. The good duke answered, "Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I am ill provided with conveniences, for I send an harbinger before me, that makes ready my lodgings, and takes care that I be royally entertained." The lord asked him who was his harbinger? He answered, "The knowledge of myself, and the consideration of what I de-

* Dr. Taylor's great Exemplar, p. 103.

serve for my sins, which is eternal torments; and [redacted] with this knowledge, I arrive at my lodgings, how[redacted] vided soever I find it, methinks it is ever better[redacted] deserve." (3.) And as the sense of sin, which[redacted] hell, sweetens present difficulties, so (to come [redacted] the present similitude) do the expectations and [redacted] a blessed harvest and reward in heaven. Th[redacted] Abraham willing to wander up and down many ye[redacted] stranger in the world; for he looked for a city th[redacted] foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The hopes of such a harvest is encouragement enough to work hard and wait long; yet some Christians are so impatient of it, that they would fain be reaping before the time; but as God hath, by an unalterable law of nature, appointed both the seasons of seed-time and harvest, which are therefore called the appointed weeks of the harvest, Jer. v. 24. and these cannot be hastened; but when we have done all that we can on our part, must wait till God send the former and the latter rain, and give every natural cause its effect; so is it in reference to our spiritual harvest; we are appointed to sweat in the use of all God's appointments, and when we have done all, must patiently wait till the divine decrees be accomplished, and the time of the promise be fully come; *In due time we shall reap, if we faint not.* To which patient expectation, and quiet waiting for the glory to come, these following considerations are of excellent use.

1. As the husbandman knows when the seed-time is past, it will not be long to the harvest, and the longer he waits, the nearer still it is; so the Christian knows, "It is but yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "And that now his salvation is nearer than when he first believed." What a small point of

ne is our waiting time, compared with eternity? Yet few days more, and then comes the long expected and elcome harvest.

2. The husbandman can find other work to do, before e reaping-time come; he need not stand idle, though cannot yet reap. And cannot a Christian find any rk to do for God till he come to heaven? O there is ch work to do, and such work as is only proper to this me! You may now reprove sin, exhort to duty, succ the distressed; this is good work, and this is your ly time for such work; the whole of eternity will be ten up in other employments. "I think it meet," saith ter, "as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir up your nds, knowing shortly that I must put off this tabernae." I know I have but a little time to work among you, m almost at heaven, and therefore am willing to husd this present moment as well as I can for you. O ristians! you need not stand idle; look round about upon the multitude of forlorn sinners; speak now to m for God; speak now to God for them; for shortly shall speak so no more, you shall see them no more till see them at Christ's bar; God leaves you here for ir sakes, up and be doing: If you have done all you re to do for yourselves and them, he would have you heaven immediately; you should not wait a moment ger for your glory.

3. Husbandmen know, though they cannot yet gather the precious fruits of the earth, yet all this while they ripening and preparing for the harvest; they would house it green, or take it before its time. And is not s also my preparation time for glory? As God prered heaven for his people, by an eternal *decree*, Matt. v. 34. by an act of *creation*, Heb. xi. 10. by the death

working in us." He is every day at work, by
ces and by providences, to perfect his work in
soon as that is finished, we shall hear a voice
"Come up hither, and immediately we shall
spirit;" for how ardently soever we long for th
ble day, Christ longs for it more than we can do

The husbandman is glad of the first fruits, tha
ages him, though the greatest part be yet out:
not you received the first fruits of that glory?
not earnests, pledges, and first fruits of it? It is
fault, if every day you feed not upon such bles
forts of the Spirit. O how might the interpo
even all the days of your patience here be
with such prelibations of the glory to come!

5. Husbandmen know it is best to reap when
reap; one handful fully ripe is worth many s
green corn. And you know, heaven will be s
you when you are fittest for it; the child would
apple whilst it is green, but he might gather it
taste it sweeter, by tarrying longer for it. We
be glorified *per saltum*. When we have got a ta
ven, we are all in haste to be gone. Then, O

or thee the fittest of seasons ; and whenever thou art ga-
ered into glory, thou shalt come as a shock of corn in
s season.

REFLECTIONS.

I have waited for thy salvation, O God! Having receiv-
l thy first fruits, my soul longs to fill its
som with the full ripe sheaves of glory : *The longing*
the hart panteth for the water-brooks, soul's reflection.
panteth my soul for thee, O God! O when
all I come and appear before God! I desire to be dis-
lved and to be with Christ! When shall I see that most
rely face? When shall I hear his soul-transporting
ice? Some need patience to die ; I need it as much to
e. Thy sights, O God, by faith, have made this world
rthen, this body a burthen, and this soul to cry, like
rsty David, *O that one would give me of the waters of*
hlehem to drink! The husbandman longs for his har-
st, because it is the reward of all his toil and labor.—
t what is his harvest to mine? What is a little corn to
enjoyment of God? What is the joy of harvest to the
r of heaven? What are the shoutings of men in the
lds to the acclamations of glorified spirits in the king-
m of God? Lord, I have gone forth, bearing more pre-
us seed than they ; when shall I return rejoicing, bring-
; my sheaves with me? Their harvest comes when they
ceive their corn ; mine comes when I leave it. O much
ired! O day of gladness of my heart! How long, Lord!
w long! Here I wait as the poor man at Bethesda's
ol, looking when my turn will come, but every one
ps into heaven before me ; yet, Lord, I am content to
it till my time is fully come : I would be content to
y for my *glorification* till I have finished the work of
r *generation;* and when I have done the will of God,

then to receive the promise. If thou have any
earth to use me in, I am content to abide: Beh
husbandman waiteth, and so will I; for thou art
judgment, and blessed are they that wait for thee

The lingering soul's reflection.

But how doth my slothful soul sink down into t
and settle itself in the love of
mal life? How doth it hug and
itself in the garment of this m
not desiring to be removed hen
more perfect and blessed state? The husbandm
deed content to stay till the appointed weeks of
vest; but would he be content to wait always? O
sual heart! Is this life of hope as contentful to th
life of vision will be? Why dost thou not groa
thyself, that this mortality might be swallowed up
Doth not the scripture describe the saints by their
looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eter
"By their hastening unto the coming of the day
What is the matter that my heart hangs back
guilt lie upon my conscience? Or, have I gott
pleasant condition in the world, which makes n
Peter on the mount, *It is good to be here?* Or, w
assurance of a better state? Must God make all n
ly comforts die, before I shall be willing to die?
faith; awake, my love, beat up the drowsy desir
soul, that I may say, *Make haste, my beloved, a*
away.

CHAPTER XV.

UPON THE HARVEST SEASON.

Corn, fully ripe, is reap'd, and gather'd in;
So must yourselves, when ripe in grace or sin.

OBSERVATION.

When the fields are white to harvest, then husbandmen lk through them, rub the ears, and finding the grain l and solid, they presently prepare their scythes and kles, send for their harvest-men, who quickly reap and w them down; and after these follow the binders, who it up: From the field, where it grew, it is carried to barn, where it is threshed out; the good grain ga-red into a heap, the chaff separated and burnt, or own to the dung-hill. How bare and naked do the ds look after harvest, which before were pleasant to hold; When the harvest-men enter into the field, it is allude to that, Joel ii. 3.) before them like the garden Eden, and behind them a desolate wilderness; and, in ne places, it is usual to set fire to the dry stubble, when e corn is housed, which rages furiously, and covers it with ashes.

APPLICATION.

The application of this I find made to my hands by hrist himself. "The field is the world; the good seed e the children of the kingdom; the tares are the chil-en of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the vil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers e the angels."

The field is the world; there both the godly and ungod-live and grow together, till they be both ripe, and then ey shall both be *reaped down* by death; death is the

saints into their graves, when judgments are con
the world. "The righteous perish, and no m
it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, n
sidering that the righteous is taken away from t
come." Methuselah died the year before the fl
gustin a little before the sacking of Hippo, Pareu
fore the taking of Heidelburg, Luther a little b
wars broke out in Germany. But what speak I
saints? Sometimes the Lord houses great nu
gether before some sweeping judgment come
many bright and glorious stars did set almost toget
in the compass of a few years, to the astonishmer
wise and tender hearts in England? I find som
thus ranked in a funeral elegy:

> The learned Twisse went first, it was his right:
> Then holy Palmer, Burroughs, Love, Gough, W
> Hill, Whitaker, grave Gataker and Strong,
> Perne, Marshall, Robinson, all gone along.
> I have not nam'd them half; their only strife
> Had been, of late, who should first part with life
> These few who yet survive, sick of this age,
> Long to have done their parts, and leave the sta

e of death, when God inflicts it. "No man can keep his own soul in the day of death, and there is no dis-ge in that war." The frail body of man is as unable thstand that stroke, as the weak reeds, or feeble stalks e corn, are to resist the keen scythe and sharp sickle. The reapers receive the wheat, which they cut down, their arms and bosom. Hence that expression, by of imprecation upon the wicked. "Let them be as grass upon the house-top, which withers before it s up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor at bindeth sheaves his bosom." Such withered grass he wicked, who are never taken into the reaper's n; but as soon as saints are cut down by death, they nto the hands and bosoms of the angels of God, who them in their arms and bosoms to God their father. look, as these blessed spirits did exceedingly rejoice eir own conversion, Luke, xv. 10. and thought it no nor to minister to them whilst they stood in the field. i. 14. So when they are cut down by death, they rejoice to be their convoy to heaven.

When the corn and weeds are reaped or mowed n they shall never grow any more in that field, nei-shall we ever return to live an animal life any more death. "As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth r; so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up nore; he shall return no more to his house, neither his place know him any more."

stly, to come home to the particular subject of this ter, The reapers are never sent to cut down the har-till it be fully ripe, neither will God reap down saints nners till they be come to a maturity of grace or wick-ss. Saints are not reaped down till their grace is . "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, as a

shock of corn cometh in its season." "Not that every godly man dies in such a full old age, (saith Mr. Caryl on that place,) but yet, in one sense, it is an universal truth, and ever fulfilled; for whensoever they die, they die in a good age; yea, though they die in the spring and flower of their youth, they die in a good old age; (*i. e.*) they are ripe for death whenever they die. Whenever a godly man dies it is harvest time with him, though, in a natural capacity, he be cut down while he is green, and cropped in the bud or blossom, yet in his spiritual capacity he never dies before he be ripe: God ripens him speedily, when he intends to take him out of the world speedily; he can let out such warm rays and beams of his spirit upon them as shall soon maturate the seeds of grace into a preparedness for glory."

The wicked also have their ripening time for hell and judgment: God doth, with much long-suffering, endure the vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction. Of their ripeness for judgment the scripture often speaks. "The sin of the Amorites is not yet full." And of Babylon it is said, "O thou that dwellest upon many waters! thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness."

It is worthy of remark, that the measure of the sin, and the end of the sinner, come together. "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest of the earth is ripe; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.—Where, note, sinners are not cut down till they be ripe and ready. Indeed, they are never ripe for death, nor ready for the grave; that is, fit to die: yet they are always ripe for wrath, and ready for hell before they die. Now, as husbandmen judge of the ripeness of their harvest by the colour and hardness of the grain, so may we *judge of* the ripeness both of saints and sinners for heaven *or hell, by* these following signs.

THREE SIGNS OF THE MATURITY OF GRACE.

1. When the corn is near ripe, it bows the head, and stoops lower than when it is green. When the people of God are near ripe for heaven, they grow more humble and self-denying, than in the days of their first profession. The longer a saint grows in the world, the better he is still acquainted with his own heart, and his obligations to God; both which are very humbling things. Paul had one foot in heaven when he called himself the chiefest of sinners, and least of saints. A Christian, in progress of his knowledge and grace, is like a vessel cast into the sea, the more it fills, the deeper it sinks. Those that went to study at Athens, saith Plutarch, at first coming seemed to themselves to be wise men, afterwards only lovers of wisdom, and after that only rhetoricians, such as could speak of wisdom, but knew little of it; and last of all idiots in their own apprehensions; still, with the increase of learning, laying aside their pride and arrogancy.

2. When harvest is nigh, the grain is more solid and pithy than ever it was before; green corn is soft and spungy, but ripe corn is substantial and weighty: So it is with Christians; the affections of a young Christian, perhaps, are more feverous and sprightly, but those of a grown Christian are more judicious and solid; their love to Christ abounds more and more in all judgment. The limbs of a child are more active and pliable, but as he grows up to a perfect state, the parts are more consolidated and firmly knit. The fingers of an old musician are not so nimble, but he hath a more judicious ear in music than in his youth.

3. When corn is dead ripe it is apt to fall of its own accord to the ground, and there shed, whereby it doth, as it were anticipate the harvest-man, and calls upon him to put in the sickle. Not unlike to which are the lookings and

longings, the groanings and hastenings of ready Christians to their expected glory; they hasten to the coming of the Lord, or, as Montanus more fitly renders it, they hasten the coming of the Lord, (*i. e.*) they are urgent and instant in their desires and cries to hasten his coming; their desires sally forth to meet the Lord; they willingly take death by the hand; as the corn bends to the earth, so doth these souls to heaven: This shows their harvest to be near.

SIX SIGNS OF THE MATURITY OF SIN.

When sinners are even dead ripe for hell, these signs appear upon them; or by these, at least, you may conclude those souls not to be far from wrath, upon whom they appear.

1. When conscience is wasted, and grown past feeling, having no more for sin; when it ceases to check, reprove and smite for sin any more, the day of that sinner is at hand, his harvest is even come. The greatest violation of conscience is the greatest of sins; this was the case of the forlorn Gentiles, among whom Satan had such plentiful harvest; the patience of God suffered them to grow till their consciences had become seared, and past feeling. Eph. iv. 19. When a member is so mortified, that if you lance and cut it ever so much, no fresh blood, or quick flesh appears, nor doth the man feel any pain in all this, then it is time to cut it off.

2 When men give themselves over to the gratification of their lusts, to commit sin with greediness, then are they grown to a maturity of sin; when men have slipped the reins of conscience, and rush headlong into all impiety, then the last sands of God's patience are running down. Thus Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner gave themselves over to wickedness and

strange sins, and then justice quickly gave them up for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

3. That man is even ripe for hell, that is become a contriver of sin, a designer, a student in wickedness. One would think it strange, that any man should set his invention on work upon such a subject as sin is, that any should study to become a dexterous artist this way! and yet the scripture frequently speaks of such, "whose bellies prepare deceit, who travail in pain to bring forth this deformed birth, who wink with their eyes," whilst plodding wickedness, as men used to do when they are most intent upon the study of any knotty problem. These have so much of hell already in them, that they are more than half in hell already.

4. He that of a forward professor is turned a bitter persecutor, is also within a few rounds of the top of the ladder; the contempt of their light the Lord hath already punished upon them, in their obduracy and madness against the light. Reader, if thou be gone thus far, thou art almost gone beyond all hope of recovery. Towards other sinners God usually exercises more patience, but with such he makes short work. When Judas turns traitor to his Lord, he is quickly sent to his own place. Such as are again entangled and overcome of those lusts they once seemed to have clean escaped, these bring upon themselves swift damnation, and their judgment lingers not.

5. He that can endure no reproof or controul in the way of his sin, but derides all council, and, like a strong current, rages at and sweeps away all obstacles in his way, will quickly fall into the dead lake. "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." This is a death-spot, a hell-spot wherever it appears. From this very symp-

tom the prophet plainly predicted the approaching ruin of Amaziah. "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my voice." He that will not be timely counselled shall be quickly destroyed.

Lastly, When a man comes to glory in his sin, and boast of his wickedness, then it is time to cut him down, "whose end is destruction, whose glory is in their shame." This is a braving, a daring of God to his face; and with whomsoever he bears long, to be sure these are none of them.

You see now what are the signs of a full ripe sinner; and when it comes to this, either with a nation, or with a single person, then ruin is near. It is in the filling up of the measure of sin, as in the filling up of a vessel cast into the sea, which rolls from side to side, taking in the water by little and little till it be full, and then down it sinks to the bottom. Mean while, admirable is divine patience, which bears with those vessels of wrath, whilst fitting for destruction.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Cheer thyself, O my soul! with the heart-strengthening bread of this divine meditation. Let faith turn every drop of this truth into a soul-reviving cordial. God hath sown the precious seed of grace upon my soul; and though my heart hath been an unkind soil, which hath kept it back, and much hindered its growth, yet, blessed be the Lord, it still grows on, though by slow degrees; and from the springing of the seed, and shooting forth of those gracious habits, I may conclude an approaching harvest: Now is my salvation nearer than when I believed; every day I come nearer to my salvation. Rem.

The reflection of a growing Christian.

11. O that every day I were more active for the of my salvation! Grow on, my soul, and add to thy virtue, to thy virtue knowledge, &c. Grow on from to faith; keep thyself under the ripening influences avenly ordinances: The faster thou growest in grace, ooner thou shalt be reaped down in mercy, and d up in the bundle of life. 1 Sam. xv. 29. I have et attained the measure and proportion of grace as- d to me, neither am I already perfect, but am reach- rth to the things before me, and pressing towards ark for the prize of my heavenly calling. Phil. iii.

3. O mercy to be admired! that I who lately had oot in hell, stand now with one foot in heaven!

But the case is far different with me; whilst others are ripening apace for heaven, I am with- ering; many a soul ploughed up by convic- tion, and sown by sanctification long after me, hath quite over-topped and out- grown me; my sweet and early blossoms ipped and blown off, my bright morning over-cast louded: had I kept on, according to the rate of my growth, I had either now been in heaven, or at least e suburbs of it on earth; but my graces wither and ish, my heart contracts and cools to heavenly things; un and rain of ordinances and providences improve ny graces; how sad therefore is the state of my soul!

reflection decaying tian.

Thy case, O declining saint, is sad, but not like mine: thine is but a temporary remission of the acts of grace, which is recoverable; but I am judicially hardened, and treasuring up to myself wrath against the day of wrath. Time was when I had some tender sense , when I could mourn and grieve for it; now I have

reflection hardening r.

hath cut down many of my companions in sin r
me. What doth this admirable patience, this l
ing, drawn out to a wonder, speak concerning
it not tell me, that the Lord is not willing I sho
but rather come to repentance? 2 Peter ii
what argument is like his pity and patience to
to repentance? O that I may not frustrate at l
of a long-suffering God, lest he proportion the
his wrath according to the length of his patienc

CHAPTER XVI.

UPON THE CARE OF HUSBANDMEN TO I FOR WINTER.

Your winter store in summer you provide
To Christian prudence this must be apply

OBSERVATION.

Good husbands are careful in summer to r

is seldom found in haste, so it is often lost by delay. It a good proverb, which the frugal Dutch have among em: *Bonus servatius faciet bonum bonifacium;* A good ver will make a good benefactor: And it is a good proerb of our own—He that neglects the occasion, the occaon will neglect him. Husbandmen know that summer ll not hold all the year; neither will they trust to the pes of a mild and favorable winter, but in season prode for the worst.

APPLICATION.

What excellent Christians should we be, were we but provident and thoughtful for our souls? It is, doubtss, a singular point of Christian wisdom to foresee a day spiritual straits and necessities; and, during the day of ace, to make provision for it. This great gospel truth excellently shadowed forth in this natural observation, hich I shall branch out into these seven particulars.

1. Husbandmen know there is a change and vicissitude seasons and weather; though it be pleasant summer eather now, yet winter will tread upon the heel of sumer; frosts, snows and great falls of rains must be excted. This alternate course of seasons, in nature, is ttled by a firm law of the God of nature, to the end of e world. "Whilst the earth remaineth, seed time and rvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night, all not cease."

And Christians know that there are changes in the ght hand of the Most High, in reference to their spirital seasons. If there be a *spring time* of the gospel, there ll be also an *autumn;* if a day of *prosperity*, it will set a night of *adversity:* "for God hath set the one over ainst the other." In heaven there is a day of everlastg serenity; in hell a night of perfect endless horror and

darkness; on earth light and darkness take their t
prosperity and adversity, even to souls as well as bo
succeed each other. If there be a gospel day, a d
grace now current, it will have its period of deter
tion. Gen. iii. 6.

2. Common prudence and experience enable the
bandman, in the midst of summer, to foresee a winte
provide for it before he feel it; yea, natural in
teaches this to the very birds of the air, and beasts
field.

And spiritual wisdom should teach Christians to
cise their foreseeing faculties, and not suffer them t
evil before they fear it. But Oh! the stupifying i
of sin! Though the stork in the heavens knows h
pointed time, and the turtle, crane and swallow the
of their coming, yet man, whom God hath made
than the fowls of the air, in this acts quite below th

3. The end of God's ordaining a summer seaso
sending warm and pleasant weather, is to ripen the
of the earth, and give the husbandman fit opportu
gather them in.

And God's design of giving men a day of grace
furnish them with an opportunity for the everlastin
piness and salvation of their souls. "I gave her a
to repent." It is not a mere reprieval of the so
only a delay of the execution of threatened wrath, t
there be much mercy in that; but the peculiar aim
patience and bounty of God, is to open for them a
escape the wrath to come, "by leading them to re
ance." Rom. ii. 4.

4. The husbandman doth not find all harvest se
alike favorable; sometimes they have much fair wea
and meet with no hindrance in their business; o

times it is a catching harvest, but now and then a fair day, and then they must be nimble, or all is lost.

There is also a great difference in soul seasons: some have had a long and fair season of grace; a hundred and twenty years did God wait upon the old world in the ministry of Noah. Long did God wait upon the gainsaying Israelites. "I have a long time held my peace; I have been still and refrained myself." Others have a short and catching season; all lies upon a day, upon a tide of time.

5. A proper season neglected and lost is irrecoverable. Many things in husbandry must be done in their season, or cannot be done at all for that year; if he plough not, and sow not, in the proper season, he loses the harvest of that year.

It is even so as to spiritual seasons: Christ neglected and grace despised, in the season when God offers them, are irrecoverably lost. "Then," that is, when the season is over, "they shall call upon me, but I will not hear." Oh! there is a great deal of time in a short opportunity; that may be done or prevented in an hour rightly timed, which cannot be done or prevented in a man's lifetime afterwards. There was one resolved to kill Julius Cæsar such a day; the night before, a friend sent him a letter to acquaint him with it; but he being at supper, and busy in discourse, said, to-morrow is a new day; and indeed it was *dies novissima*, his last day to him. Whence it became a proverb in Greece, *To-morrow is a new day.* Our glass runs in heaven, and we cannot see how much or little of the sand of God's patience is yet to run down; but this is certain, when that glass is run, there is nothing to be done for our souls. "O that thou hadst known, at least, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now *they are hid from thine* eyes."

labors, when others shall be exposed to sniits an
And he that provides for eternity, and lays up for
a good foundation against the time to come,
when others are hungry, and sing when others h
lxv. 13. A day of death will come, and that
day of straits to all negligent souls; but then th
Christian shall enjoy the peace and comfort that
in upon his heart, from his holy care and sin
gence in duties. "This is our rejoicing, the
of our conscience, that in sincerity and godly s
we have had our conversation in this world." "
ber now, O Lord, how I have walked before the
and with a perfect heart." A day of judgment
and then foolish virgins, who neglected the seas
ting oil in their lamps, will be put to their shi
they come to the wise and say, "Give us of your
they have none to spare, and the season of buyi
over.

7. No wise husbandman will neglect a fit o
of gathering in his hay and corn, upon a presu
much fair weather to come: he will not say, T

be hereafter: hereafter I may wish "to see one of ays of the Son of Man, and not see it." It is sad to how cunning some men are to dispute themselves f heaven, as if the devil had hired them to plead t their own souls, sometimes urging the example of that were called at the eleventh hour, Matt. xx. 6. metimes that of the penitent thief: But Oh! to how purpose is the former pleaded! They that were at the eleventh hour were never called before, as have been; no man had hired, that is, called or in- hem to Christ; and for the thief, as Mr. Fenner observes, it was a singular and extraordinary ex-

It was done when Christ hanged on the cross, as to be inaugurated; then kings manifest such , and pardon such crimes as are never pardoned ards. Besides, God was then in a way of working es—then he rent the rocks—opened the graves— the dead—and converted this thief; but God is now that way.

REFLECTIONS.

have indeed been a good husband for the world: what care and providence have I look- for myself and family, to provide food rish them, and clothes to defend them the asperities of winter? meanwhile ting to make provision for eternity, or ire of my soul. O my destitute soul! how much slighted and undervalued thee? I have taken more r an horse, or an ox, than for thee; a well-stored ut an empty soul. Will it not shortly be with me the careless mother, who, when her house was on sily bestirred herself to save the goods, but forgot ild, though it were saved by another hand! and

The careless soul's reflection.

then minding her child, ran up and down like one distracted, wringing her hands, and crying, O my child! my child! I have saved my goods, and lost my child! Such will be the case of thee, my soul. Besides, how easy will my conviction be at the bar of Christ? Will not my providence and care for the things of this life leave me speechless and self-condemned in that day? What shall I answer when the Lord shall say, Thou couldst foresee a winter, and seasonably provide for it; yea, thou hadst so much care of thy very beasts, to provide for their necessities; and why tookest thou no care for thy soul? Was that only not worth the caring for?

The presumptuous soul's reflection.

2. Is it so dangerous to neglect a present proper season of grace? What then have I done, who have suffered so many seasons to slip away in my hand, upon a groundless hope of future opportunities? Ah, deluded wretch! what if that supposition fail! Where am I then? I am not the Lord of time, neither am I sure, that he who is, will ever vouchsafe an hour of grace in old age, to him that hath neglected many such hours in youth; neither indeed is it ordinary for God so to do. It is storied of Caius Marius Victorius, who lived about three hundred years after Christ, and to his old age continued a Pagan; but at last being convinced of the Christian verity, he came to Simplicianus, and told him he would be a Christian; but neither he nor the church could believe it, it being so rare an example for any to be converted at his age; but at last, seeing it was real, there was a shouting and gladness, and singing of psalms in all churches; the people crying, Caius Marius Victorius is become a Christian! This was written for a wonder; and what ground have I to think that God will work such

wonders for me, who have neglected his ordinary means of salvation?

3. Bless the Lord, O my soul! who gave thee a season, a day for eternal life, which is more than he hath afforded for thousands; yea, bless the Lord for giving thee an heart to understand and improve that season. I confess I have not improved it as I ought, yet this I can through mercy say, that however it fare in future times with my outward man, though I have no treasures or stores laid up on earth, or if I have, they are but corruptible, yet I have a blessed hope laid up in heaven. Col. i. 5. I have bags that wax not old. Whilst worldlings rejoice in their stores and heaps, I rejoice in these eternal treasures.

The industrious soul's reflection.

CHAPTER XVII.

UPON REAPING THE SAME WE SOW.

When from tare seeds you see choice wheat to grow,
Then from your lusts may joy and comfort flow.

OBSERVATION.

God gives to every seed its own body. At first he created every tree and herb of the field, having its seed in itself, for the propagation of their *species*, and they all inviolably observe the law of their creation. All fruits naturally rise out of the seeds and roots proper to them: "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles;" such productions would be monstrous in nature; and although the juice or sap of the earth be the common

matter of all kind of fruits, yet it is specificated according to the different sorts of plants and seeds it nourisheth. Where wheat is sown, it is turned into wheat; in an apple-tree, it becomes an apple, and so in every sort of plants or seeds, it is concocted into fruits proper to the kind.

APPLICATION.

Translate this into spirituals, and the proposition shadowed forth by it is fully expressed by the apostle, "What a man sows, that shall he reap: They that sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and they that sow to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." And as sure as the harvest follows the seed-time, so sure shall such fruits and effects result from the seeds of such actions. "He that soweth iniquity, shall reap vanity." "And they that now go forth, weeping, and bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them." The sum of all this is, that our present actions have the same respect and relation to future rewards and punishments, as the seed we sow in our fields hath to the harvest we reap from it. Every gracious action is the seed of joy, and every sinful action the seed of anguish and sorrow to the soul that soweth it. Two things are sensibly presented to us in this similitude.

1. That as the seed sown is presently covered from our sight under the clods, and for sometime after we see no more of it, and yet at last it appears again; by which it is evident to us, that it is not finally lost: so our present actions, though *physically* transient, and perhaps forgotten, yet are not lost, but after a time shall appear again, in order to a retribution.

If this were not so, all good and holy actions would be to the loss of him that performed them. All the self-de-

spending duties and sharp sufferings of the people of , would turn to their damage, though not in point of sty, yet in point of personal utility; and then also, : difference would there be betwixt the actions of a and a beast, with respect to future good or evil? , man would then be more feared and obeyed than , and all souls be swayed in their motions only by the ence of present things: And where then would re- n be found in the world? It is an excellent note of tellius; "Our works," saith he, "do not pass away on as they are done, but as seed sown, shall after a rise up to all eternity: Whatever we think, speak, lo, once spoken, thought, or done, is eternal, and es for ever."

hat Zeuxis, the famous limner, said of his work, may uly said of all our works—*Æternitati pingo*, I paint eternity. O, how careful should men be of what speak and do, whilst they are commanded so to speak so to do, as those that shall be judged by the perfect of liberty! James ii. 12. What more transient than a word? And yet for such words men shall give an unt in the day of judgment. That is the first thing: ons, like seed, shall rise and appear again in order to ribution.

he other thing held forth in this similitude is, that ac- ing to the nature of our actions now, will be the fruit reward of them then. Though the fruit or conse- ce of holy actions, for the present, may seem bitter, the fruit of sinful actions sweet and pleasant; yet e is nothing more certain, than that their future s shall be according to their present nature and ity. Then Dionysius shall retract that saying—

quam prospera navigatio a Deo datur sacrilegis,

Behold how God favors our sacrileges! Some
dead, though but rarely, God causes sinners
the world, the same that they have sown; as
their sin, such hath been their punishment. It
ly confessed by Adoni-bezek, Judg. i. 7. "As I
so hath God requited me."

Socrates, in his church history, furnishes us
tinent passage to this purpose, concerning Vale
peror, who was an Arian, and a bitter persec
Christians: This man, when eighty of the
Christians sailed from Constantinople to Ni
treat with him about the points of Arianism, a
the matter by way of dispute; the emperor,
their arrival, while they were yet in the harb
a man landed, caused the ships to be fired wh
were, and so consumed them all. Not long a
wars against the Goths, he was overthrown,
himself in a little cottage, the enemy coming
and him together. Thus this wretch reape
sowed, burning for burning, the very same in
him again. It is not always so in this worl
shall be in that to come: The tables shall th
ed, and the *scene* altered; for shall not the J
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On the same ground many have been tempte
ism; but then the world shall see distribut
shining out in its glory. "Tribulation, anguish
to every soul of man that doth evil; but glory
peace to every man that worketh good." T
appear what seed we sowed, what lives we liv
God shall bring every work into judgment,
secret thing, whether it be good or evil."

REFLECTIONS.

1. This meditation may be to me what the hand-writing upon the wall was to that profane prince, Dan. v. 5, 6. and a like effect it should have upon me; for if all the actions of this life be seed sown for the next, Lord, what a crop, what a dreadful harvest am I like to have! How many oaths and curses, lies and vain words have I sown with my tongue! How have I wronged, oppressed and over-reached in my dealings! Rushed into all profaneness, drunkenness, uncleanness, sabbath-breaking, &c. "as the horse rusheth into the battle!" And what shall I reap from such seed as this, but vengeance and fury? These sins seemed pleasant in the commission, but Oh! how bitter will it be in their account? "What shall I do when God riseth up; and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?" Is it not reasonable and just, O my soul! that thou shouldst eat the fruit of thine own planting, and reap what thou hast sown? I thought nothing but profit and pleasure would spring from my lust, but now I see it is a root bearing gall and wormwood. Deut. xxix. 18. Wretched soul! what shall I do? By these actions I am undone. I have been the author of mine own ruin—twisted an halter with mine own fingers for the execution of mine own soul! O! let me rather taste the bitterness of sin, by repentance now, than enjoy its present pleasures, which betray the soul to endless wrath!

The moral man's reflection.

2. How have I also been deceived in this matter! I verily thought that glory and immortality would have been the fruit and product of my moral honesty and righteousness; that joy and peace had been

The profane person's reflection.

seminally contained in those actions, but now I see such fruit can spring from no other root but special grace. Glory is disclosed from no other bud but holiness. Alas, all my planting and sowing was to little purpose; because I sowed not the right kind of seed; the best fruit I can expect from this is but a smaller degree of damnation.

Deluded soul! thy seed is no better than what the moral heathens sowed: And do I expect better fruit than what they reaped? Civility without Christ is but a glorious slavery; and Satan holds me as fast in captivity by it as he doth the profane by the pleasure of their sins. Either I must sow better seed, or look to reap bitter fruit.

3. Meanwhile, bless the Lord, O my soul! who enabled thee to sow better seed—who kept thee watching, humbling thyself and praying, whilst others have been swearing, drinking and blaspheming: This will yield thee fruit of joy in the world to come; yea, it already yields present peace to thy conscience: These revelations are better than gold, sweeter than the honey and the honey-comb; not that such fruits are meritoriously obtained in these actions; I sow to myself in righteousness, but I reap in mercy. Hos. x. 12. This is the way in which God will save and glorify me. O then, let me be ever abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that my labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

THE POEM.

'Twould be a strange and monstrous thing to see
Cherries or plumbs grow on an apple-tree.

Who ever gather'd from the thistle figs ?
Or fruitful grapes from off the worthless twigs
Of pricking thorns ? In nature still we find
All its productions answering to their kind.
As are the plants we set, or seeds we sow,
Such is the fruit we shake, and corn we mow :
And canst thou think, that from corruption's root
Thy soul shall pluck the sweet and pleasant fruit
Of spiritual peace ! Whoever, that was wise,
Abus'd himself with such absurdities ?
Look what you sow, the very same you'll reap,
The fruit of what you plant, be sure you'll eat.
How are they baffled by a subtle devil,
Who hope for heaven whilst their ways are evil ?
Such reasonings here their credulous souls beguile,
At which, in other things, themselves would smile.
Our present acts, though slightly passed by,
Are so much seed sown for eternity.
The seeds of prayers, secret groans and tears,
Will shoot at last into the full-blown ears
Of peace and joy. Blessed are they that sow
Beside these *waters;* yea, thrice bless'd, that go
Bearing such precious seed : Though now they mourn,
With joyful sheaves they shortly shall return.
Needs must the full-ripe fruits in heaven be good,
When as the seed was glory in the bud.
But Oh ! the bitter, baneful fruits of sin,
When all the pleasure sinners have therein,
Like faded blossoms, to the ground shall fall,
Then they will taste the wormwood and the gall !
What God and conscience now of sin report,
You slight, and with their dreadful threat'nings sport :
But he'll convince you then your ways were naught,
As Gideon the men of Succoth taught.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UPON THE JOY OF HARVEST-MEN.

Great is the joy of harvest-men; yet less
Than their's whom God doth with his favor bless.

OBSERVATION.

Among all earthly joys, these four sorts are noted in scripture as the most excellent and remarkable. (1.) *Nuptial joys:* The day of espousals is the day of the gladness of a man's heart. Cant. iii. 11. (2.) *The joy of children:* Though now it seems but a common mercy to most, and a burthen to some, yet the people of God were wont to esteem it a choice *mercy*, and rejoiced greatly in it. There is "joy that a man is born into the world." (3.) *The joy of conquest and victories*, when men divide the spoil: And lastly, *The joy of harvest.* These two we find put together as principal matters of joy. "They joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." The joy of harvest is no small joy—*Gaudium messis est messis gaudii;* The joy of the harvest is the harvest of their joy. It is usual with men, when they have reaped down their harvest, or cut the neck, as they call it, to demonstrate their joy by shouting and loud acclamations.

APPLICATION.

Thus, and unspeakably more than thus, do saints rejoice and shout for joy, when they reap the favor and love of God, for which they labored in many a weary duty. This joy of harvest, as great as it is, and as much as carnal hearts are lifted up with it, is but a trifle, a thing of nought, compared with yours; after they have

sown to themselves in righteousness, and waited for the effects and returns of their duties with patience, and at last come to reap in mercy either the full harvest in heaven, or but the first fruits of it on earth, yet rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "This puts more gladness into their hearts, than when corn and wine increase." Carnal joys are but as soul-fevers, the agues of the inward man. There is a great difference betwixt the unnatural inflammations of a feverish body, which waste the spirits, and drink up the radical moisture, and the kindly well tempered heat of an healthy body; and as much between the sweet, serene and heavenly joy which flows from the bosom of Christ in the hearts of believers, and those earthly delights which carnal hearts, in a sensual way, suck out of creature-enjoyments. I will shew you the transcendency of spiritual joys, above the joys of harvest in these eight particulars following:

1. You that joy with the joy of the harvest are glad, because now you have food for yourselves and families to live upon all the year; but the Christian rejoiceth, because he hath bread to eat that the world knows not of. Christ is the food of his soul, and his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, (*i. e.*) the most real and excellent food. You read, Psalm lxxviii. 25. that men did eat angels' food, (*i. e.*) manna; which was such excellent bread, that if angels did live upon material food, this would be chosen for them; and yet this is but a type and dark shadow of Jesus Christ, the food of believers.

2. You rejoice when your harvest is in, because corn is virtually many other things besides food; you can turn it into clothes to keep you warm, and many other necessaries may be purchased by it; but yet it is not like Christ, the object of a saint's joy: Though it answers

many things, it doth not anwer all things, as Christ doth. Turn it into what you will, it hath but a limited and respective usefulness; but Jesus Christ is all in all to believers, and out of him their faith can fetch all supplies; He is their health in sickness, their strength in weakness, their ease in pain, their honor in reproach, their wealth in poverty, their friend in friendlessness, their habitation when harborless, their enlargement in bonds, the strength of their hearts, and life of their life. O! he is a full Christ! and whatever excellencies are scattered among all the creatures, do meet all in him, and much more.

3. You rejoice when you have gotten in your harvest, because now you can free those engagements, and pay those debts which you have contracted. It is a comfort to be out of debt; and you may lawfully rejoice that God gives you wherewith to quit your engagements, that you may owe no man any thing but love. But still the joy of harvest falls short of the joy of the saints; for you rejoice that you are, or have wherewith to help yourselves out of men's debts; but they rejoice that they are out of God's debt; that his book is cancelled, and their sins pardoned; that by reason of the imputed righteousness of Christ, the law can demand nothing from them. Rom. viii. 1. O what matter of joy is this!

4. You rejoice, because now your corn is out of danger; all the while it was abroad, it was in hazard; but now it is housed, you fear not the rain; but Christians rejoice, not because their corn is safe, but because their souls are so. All the while they abode in an unregenerate state, they were every moment in danger of the storms of wrath; but now, being in Christ, that danger is over; and what comparison is there betwixt the safety of a little corn, and the security of an immortal soul?

5. Your joy is but a gift of common providence. Turks and heathens can rejoice with your joy, but the joy of a Christian is a peculiar favor and gift of God. Corn is given to all nations; even the most barbarous and wicked have store of it; but Christ is the portion but of a few, and those the dearly beloved of God. Luther said of the whole Turkish empire, (where is the best and greatest store of corn,) that it is but a crumb which the master of the family throws to the dogs. He that had more corn than his barns could hold, now wants a drop of water to cool his tongue. Christ is a gift bestowed only upon God's elect.

6. Your joy will have an end; the time is coming that when you have reaped down your harvests, yourselves must be reaped down by death, and then you shall rejoice in these things no more. But when your joy is ended, then is the joy of saints perfected; they reap their harvest when you leave your harvest; their consolation is everlasting.

7. God can separate your joy from these enjoyments, even while you have them, as well as when you leave them. It is one thing for a man to have riches and full barns, and another thing to have comfort in them. Eccles. v. 19, 20. But now the joy of Christians is a thing inseparable from their enjoyment of Christ; indeed, the sense of their interest may be lost, and so the acts of their joy intermitted; but they always have it in the seed, if not in the fruit. "Joy is sown for the upright." He hath it still in the principle and in the promise.

8. The joy of harvest-men, for the most part, is only in their harvest, and in such earthly things; take that away, and their joy ceases. Earthly hearts are acquainted with no higher comforts; but the people of God can

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The moral man's reflection.

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THE POEM.

'Twould be a strange and monstrous thing to see
Cherries or plumbs grow on an apple-tree.

Who ever gather'd from the thistle figs ?
Or fruitful grapes from off the worthless twigs
Of pricking thorns ? In nature still we find
All its productions answering to their kind.
As are the plants we set, or seeds we sow,
Such is the fruit we shake, and corn we mow :
And canst thou think, that from corruption's root
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Of spiritual peace ! Whoever, that was wise,
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APPLICATION.

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5. Your joy is but a gift of common providence. Turks and heathens can rejoice with your joy, but the joy of a Christian is a peculiar favor and gift of God. Corn is given to all nations; even the most barbarous and wicked have store of it; but Christ is the portion but of a few, and those the dearly beloved of God. Luther said of the whole Turkish empire, (where is the best and greatest store of corn,) that it is but a crumb which the master of the family throws to the dogs. He that had more corn than his barns could hold, now wants a drop of water to cool his tongue. Christ is a gift bestowed only upon God's elect.

6. Your joy will have an end; the time is coming that when you have reaped down your harvests, yourselves must be reaped down by death, and then you shall rejoice in these things no more. But when your joy is ended, then is the joy of saints perfected; they reap their harvest when you leave your harvest; their consolation is everlasting.

7. God can separate your joy from these enjoyments, even while you have them, as well as when you leave them. It is one thing for a man to have riches and full barns, and another thing to have comfort in them. Eccles. v. 19, 20. But now the joy of Christians is a thing inseparable from their enjoyment of Christ; indeed, the sense of their interest may be lost, and so the acts of their joy intermitted; but they always have it in the seed, if not in the fruit. "Joy is sown for the upright." He hath it still in the principle and in the promise.

8. The joy of harvest-men, for the most part, is only in their harvest, and in such earthly things; take that away, and their joy ceases. Earthly hearts are acquainted with no higher comforts; but the people of God can

joy in him, and take comfort in their earthly enjoyments too; and what comfort they take in these things is much more refined and sweet than yours; for they enjoy all those things in God, and his love in giving them puts a sweetness into them that you are unacquainted with. Thus you see how far your joys fall short of their's.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for one that hath a full barn, but no Christ.

1. How have I rejoiced in a thing of nought, and pleased myself with a vanity? God hath blessed me in my fields, and in my stores; but not with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. My barns are full of corn, but my soul is empty of grace; common bounty hath given me a fulness of the things of this life; but what if the meaning of it should be to fat me for the day of slaughter? What if this be the whole of my portion from the Lord? What if the language of his providences to my soul should be this: Lo! here I have given thee, with Ishmael, the fatness of the earth? Thou shalt not say but thou hast tasted of thy Creator's bounty; but make the most of it, for this is all that ever thou shalt have from me; there be others in the world, to whom I have denied these things; but for them I have reserved better; for the most part, they are poor in this world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. Is not this enough to damp all my carnal mirth? Should my conscience give me such a memento as Abraham in the parable gave to Dives, "Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things!" Ah! what a cut would that be to all my comforts! A man in a fever hath a lively color, but a dying heart. I have an appearance, a shadow of comfort, but a sad state of soul.

2. "Blessed be the God and Father of my Lord Jesus

Christ, who hath blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Though he hath not seen fit to give me much of this world in hand, yet it hath pleased him to settle a rich inheritance upon me by promise, the hopes and expectations whereof yield my soul more true comfort than all the present enjoyments of this world could have done. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given me my portion in this life, that by keeping me from the enjoyment, hath also preserved me from the *snares* of a prosperous estate!

A reflection for one that hath Christ, but no barn.

Lord Jesus, I have no bags, I have no barns; but thou shalt be to me instead of all those things. When others rejoice in the fulness of their earthly comforts, I will rejoice in the fulness of my Christ; they have that which, though I have not, I shall not want, and I have that which all their riches cannot purchase. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

A reflection for one that hath a full barn, and Christ too.

3. But, Lord, how am I obliged, above thousands, to love and praise thee! to bless and admire thee, who hast not only plentifully provided for my soul, but for my body too! who hast given me both the upper and the nether springs, heaven and earth, things present and things to come! Thou hast not dealt so with all; no, not with all of thy own people: many of them are strangers to the mercies which I enjoy. God hath done great things for me, O my soul! what wilt thou do for God? The freer the condition is he hath placed me in, the more am I both obliged and advantaged for his service; and yet, I doubt it will be found that many a poor Christian, that labors with his hands to get his bread, redeems more hours for

A reflection for one that hath neither a barn nor a Christ.

miserable here, and like to ever: Had I but an interest as the godly poor have, th sweeten all present troubles, me the end of them; but, alas! I am poor an contemned of men, and abhorred of God; an contempt both to heaven and earth. Lord, such a truly miserable object with compassion a portion with thy people in the world to com never better my outward condition here! O sa poverty—bless these straits and wants, that the cessitate my soul to go to Christ; make this pc way to glory, and I shall bless thee to eternity poor in this world.

CHAPTER XIX.

UPON THE THRESHING OUT OF COR

More solid grain with greater strength now th

as they have threshals of several sizes, so they bestow on some grain more, on others fewer strokes, according to the different qualities of the grain to be threshed. This observation the prophet Isaiah hath. "The fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is the cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin, but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod." The manner of beating out the corn in former times was far different from that which is now in use among us; they had the cart-wheel, which was full of iron spokes or teeth, and the hoofs of beasts for the harder sort of grain, as wheat, rye and barley; a staff or flail for the fitches, and a rod or twig for the cummin: all which instruments are proportioned to the nature of the grain.

APPLICATION.

God having to do, in a way of correction, with divers sorts of offenders, doth not use the like severity with them all, but proportions his correction to their abilities and strength. "I will not make a full end of thee, [but will correct thee in measure] and will not leave thee altogether unpunished:" Afflicted thou must be; my respect to my own glory, and thy good puts a necessity upon that; but yet I will do it moderately: I will not lay on without measure or mercy, as I intend to do upon the enemies; but will mete out your sufferings in a due proportion, even as a careful physician, in prescribing pills or potions to his patient, hath regard as well to the ability of the patient, as to the nature and quality of the disease; even so thy God, O Israel, will not afflict thee according to the greatness of his power and his wrath, answerable thereto, Psalm xc. 11. that would break thee to pieces. Nor yet will he afflict thee according to the demerit of thy sin: as it shall be much less than what I could inflict, so it shall

man's threshing his corn, and the Lord's afflic
people, stands in these particulars.

1. The husbandman's end in threshing the co
separate it from the husks and chaff; and God'
afflicting his people is, to separate them from th
"In measure, when it shooteth forth, he will deb
it;" (*i. e.*) he will moderately correct them; a
the ends of those corrections are, the next word
us. *By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob*
ed, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.
afflictions as we use soap, to cleanse away filthi
fetch out spots. Dan. xi. 35. He aims not at the
tion of their persons, but of their lusts.

2. If the husbandman have cockle, darnel, or pe
tares before him on the floor among his corn, he
gards whether it be bruised or battered to piece
thresher or no; it is a worthless thing and he spar
Such cockle and tares are the enemies of God; a
these come under his flail, he strikes them with
cy; for these the Lord prepares a new sharp t
instrument, having teeth, which shall beat them

them; the meaning is, his strokes on them shall be
r strokes; they shewed no mercy to Zion, and God
hew no mercy to them.
When the husks and chaff are perfectly separated
the grain, then the husbandman beats it no more.
i God had perfectly purged and separated the sins
people, then afflictions shall come to a perpetual
he will never smite them again: there is no noise
threshing instrument in heaven; he that beats them
iis flail on earth, will put them into his bosom in
:n.
Though the husbandman lays on, and beats his corn,
ie were angry with it, yet he loves and highly prizes
id though God strike and afflict his people, yet he
great value upon them; and it is equally absurd to
God's hatred to his people from his afflicting of them,
husbandman's hatred of his corn, because he thresh-
d beats it. "Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth,
hasteneth every son whom he receiveth."
Though the husbandman thresh and beat the corn,
e will not bruise or hurt it if he can help it; though
require more and harder strokes than others, yet
shall have more than it can endure. And though
ord afflict his servants, yet he will do them no hurt.
xxv. 6. Some need more rods than others, but none
have more than they can bear; the Lord knows the
ures and degrees of his servants' faith and patience,
accordingly shall their trials be. "Like as a father
i his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear
for he knows their frame, he remembers they are
dust; he makes a way to escape, that they may be
to bear it." This care and tenderness over his af-
d is eminently discovered in three particulars.

with their troubles; as you sometimes see the
out while the rain falls. It was so with Paul
night, and it was a sad night indeed, there stood
angel of the Lord, whose I am."

3. In taking off the affliction, when they can
longer. "He makes a way to escape that the
able to bear it." "The rod is taken off, when
eous is even ready to put forth his hand to iniq
is a Jewish proverb—When the bricks are dou
comes Moses. And it is a Christian's experienc
the spirit is ready to fail, then comes Jesus, ac
that promise, Isa. lvii. 16.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for persecutors.

1. How unlike am I to God, in the afflicting
ple? The Lord is pitiful when
them; but I have been cruel:
to them when most severe; bu
of my kindnesses to them may fit
be called severity: God smites them in love; I
ten them in hatred. Ah! what have I done?
used me as his hand. Psal. xvii. 14. or as his ro

t without mercy, that shewed no mercy, how can I ct mercy from the Lord, whose people I have per- ted mercilessly for his sake?

Is the Lord's wheat thus threshed on the *floor* of *af- flictions;* what then shall I think of my condition, who prosper and am let alone in the way of sin? Surely, the Lord looks on me as on a weed, and not as his corn; and it is too probable, that I am rather re- served for burning, than for threshing.

A reflection for an afflicted saint.

reflection uch as meet no afflict-

e there are whom God loves not so well as to spend l upon them, but saith, *Let them alone.* But misera- their condition notwithstanding their impunity! For is the interpretation but this: I will come to a ning with them altogether in hell. Lord, how much r is thy afflicting mercy, than thy sparing severity! er is the condition of an afflicted child, than of a re- d bastard. Oh! let me rather feel thy rod now, as od of a loving father, than feel thy wrath hereafter e wrath of an omnipotent avenger!

Well, then, despond not, O my soul! Thou hearest husbandman loves his corn, though he hes it; and, surely, the Lord loves not the less, because he afflicts thee ach. If affliction, then, be the way aven, blessed be God for affliction! threshing-strokes of God have come thick upon me; hich I may see what a tough and stubborn heart I : If one stroke would have done the work, he would ave lifted up his hand the second time. I have not stroke more than I had need of, 1 Pet. i. 6. and by means he will purge my sins: Blessed be God for The damned have infinitely more and harder strokes

hand; smite me he may, but hate me he cannc

CHAPTER XX.

UPON THE WINNOWING OF CORN

The fan doth cause light chaff to fly away
So shall the ungodly in God's winnowing d

OBSERVATION.

When the corn is threshed out in the floo lies mingled with empty ears, and worthless husbandman carries it out altogether into some c where, having spread his sheet for the preserv grain, he exposes it all to the wind; the good of its solidity, remains upon the sheet, but the light and empty, is partly carried quite away b and all the rest separated from the good grain tinct heap, which is carried away, either to dunghill as a worthless thing

rates the chaff. There is a double fanning or winnow-
g of men here in this world; one is *doctrinally*, in which
nse I understand that scripture, Matt. iii. 12, spoken of
hrist when he was entering upon his ministerial work;
His fan is in his hand; and he shall thoroughly purge
s floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he
ill burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The
eaching of the gospel is as a fan in Christ's hand; and
is as much as if John had thus told the Jews, that though
ere were many hypocritical ones among them, that had
w a name and place among the people of God, and glo-
ed in their church-privileges, yet there is a purging blast
truth coming, which will make them fly out of the
urch, as chaff out of the floor. Thus Christ winnows
fans the world *doctrinally;* the other is *judicially*, by
inging sore and grievous trials and sufferings upon the
urches, for this very end, that those which are but chaff,
. *e.*) empty and vain profes[illegible], may, by such winds as
ese, be separated from hi[illegible]ople.

The church increases two ways, and by two diverse
eans; *extensively* in breadth and numbers, and *intensively*
vigor and power; peace and prosperity cause the first,
fferings and adversity the last: And well may a day of
ersecution be called a winnowing day, for then are the
ople of God tossed to purpose, as corn in the sieve,
ough nothing but chaff be lost thereby. Of such a win-
wing day the prophet speaks. "I will sift the house of
rael among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve,
et shall not the least grain fall upon the earth; all the
nners of my people shall die." I will cause great agi-
tions and tossings among you by the hands of the Assy-
ans and Babylonians, into whose countries you shall be
ispersed and scattered; yet I will so govern those your

day pass as the chaff. He doth not mean th
shall pass as the chaff, but there is a day of af
distress coming, in which the wicked shall pass
before the wind; and yet, notwithstanding all
nowings upon earth, much chaff will still abide
corn; therefore God hath appointed another
winnowing of the world, even the day of judgme
ference to which it is said. "The ungodly a
but are like the chaff which the wind drives awa
fore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, n
in the congregation of the righteous;" (*i. e.*) t
day wherein he will sift the world, like corn i
and then the wicked shall appear to be but ch
God will eternally separate from his wheat.
strain the similitude, but fairly display it in th
particulars.

1. The chaff and wheat grow together in the
and upon the same root and stalk. In this, wicke
like chaff, who not only associate with the peop
but oftentimes spring up with them in the sa
and from the same root, or immediate parents

assured, God would never suffer the wicked to abide
ng in this world, were it not for his own elect that are
spersed among them: Except the Lord had such a rem-
nt dispersed in the world, he would quickly set fire to
e four quarters, and make it like Sodom.

3. The chaff is a very worthless thing, the husbandman
ces not what becomes of it; and of as little worth are
icked men. "The heart of the wicked is little worth."
he heart is the principal part of the man, and yet that is
it chaff, no worth in it; his hands, his cloaths, &c. are
orth somewhat, but his heart is worth nothing.

4. Though chaff in itself be nothing worth, yet it is of
me use to the corn while it is standing in the field; the
lk bears up the ear, and the chaff covers the grain, and
fends it from the injury of the weather. Thus God
akes wicked men of use to his people in outward society;
ey help to support and protect them in this world. "The
rth helped the woman," (*i. e.*) worldly men for carnal
ds helped the church, when a flood of persecution was
ured out. The church often helps the world, it receives
ny benefits from the people of God, and sometimes
od over-rules the world to help his church.

5. When the chaff and wheat are both brought forth
d held up to the wind in one sieve, they fall two ways;
e wheat falls down upon the floor or sheet, the chaff is
rried quite away; so that although for a time godly and
ngodly abide together, yet when this winnowing time
omes, God's wheat shall be gathered into his garner in
eaven, the chaff shall go the other way.

6. If there be any chaff among the corn, it will appear
hen it is sifted in a windy day; it cannot possibly escape,
it be well winnowed; much more impossible is it for
ny wicked man to escape the critical search of God in

that day; the closest hypocrite shall then be detected, for God will judge the secrets of men. "He will then bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart."

7. *Lastly.* After corn and chaff are separated by the winnowing wind, they shall never lie together in one heap any more: The wicked shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but themselves thrust out: There is no chaff in heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for a close hypocrite.

1. Am I an empty vain professor, that wants the pith and substance of real godliness? Then am I but chaff in God's account, though I grow among his corn; the eye of man cannot discern my hypocrisy but when he comes, whose fan is in his hand, then how plainly will it be detected? Angels and men shall discern it and say, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his hope:" How shall I abide the day of his coming? Christ is the great heart-anatomist: Things shall not be carried then by names and parties as they are now; every one shall be weighed in a just balance, and a *Mene Tekel* written upon every false heart: Great will be the perspicuity of that trial: My own conscience will join with my judge, and shall then acknowledge, that there is not one drop of injustice in all that sea of wrath: and though I am damned, yet I am not wronged: The chaff cannot stand before the wind, nor I before the judgment of Christ.

A reflection for one that neglects self-examination.

2. Is there such a fanning time coming? Why do not I then sift my heart every day by serious self-examination? No work more important to me, and yet how much have I neglected it! O my soul! thou hadst been

tter employed in searching thine own estate in refer-
ce to that day, than in prying sinfully into the hearts,
d censuring the conditions of other men: Judge thy-
lf, and thou shalt not be condemned with the world;
e work indeed is difficult, but the neglect dangerous:
ere I within a few days to stand at man's bar, there
be tried for my life, how busy should I be every hour
the day in writing to any that I thought could befriend
e, and studying every advantage to myself? And yet
hat a vast difference is there betwixt man's bar and God's?
etwixt a trial for my life and for my soul? Lord, rouse
) my sluggish heart by awful and solicitous thoughts of
at day, lest I be found among that chaff which shall be
rnt up with unquenchable fire.

5. Fear not, O my soul! though there be a blast coming
hich will drive all the chaff into hell,
t it shall blow thee no harm. "I know *A reflection for*
at when he hath tried me, I shall come *a sincere soul.*
rth as gold." I confess I have too
uch chaff about me, but yet I am not altogether chaff;
ere is a solid work of grace upon my soul that will abide
e trial: Let the judgment to come be as impartial and
act as it is possible to be, yet a grain of sincerity can-
t be lost in it; for "God will not cast away a perfect
e. an upright-hearted) man." He that is appointed to
lge the world is mine; and his imputed righteousness
ll make me full weight in the balance. Bless the Lord,
my soul, for sincerity! this will abide when common
ts and empty names will flee as the chaff before the
nd.

THE POEM.

The winnowing wind first drives the chaff away,
Next light and hollow grains; those only stay
Whose weight and solid substance can endure
This trial, and such grains are counted pure,
The corn for use is carefully preserv'd;
The useless chaff for burning flames reserv'd.
No wind but blows some good, a proverb is;
Glad shall I be if it hold true in this.
O that the wind, when you to winnowing go,
This spiritual good unto your souls might blow!
To make you pause, and sadly ruminate,
In what a doleful plight, and wretched state,
Their souls are in, who cannot hope to stand
When he shall come, whose fan is in his hand.
His piercing eyes infallibly disclose
The very reins, and inward part of those
Whose outside seeming grace so neatly paints,
That, with the best, they pass for real saints.
No hypocrite with God acceptance finds,
But, like the chaff, dispers'd by furious winds.
Their guilt shall not that searching day endure,
Nor they approach th' assemblies of the pure.
Have you observ'd, in autumn, thistle-down,
By howling Æolus scatter'd up and down
About the fields? Even so God's ireful storm
Shall chase the hypocrite, who now can scorn
The breath of close reproof, and like a rock,
Repel reproofs, and such reprovers mock.
How many, that in splendid garments walk,
Of high professions, and like angels talk,
Shall God divest, and openly proclaim
Their secret guilt, to their eternal shame?

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

UPON THE INGRAFTING OF FRUIT TREES.

Ungrafted trees can never bear good fruit;
Nor we, till grafted on a better root.

OBSERVATION.

A WILD tree naturally springing up in the wood or edge, and never grafted or removed from its native soil, may bear some fruit, and that fair and beautiful to the eye, yet it will give you no content at all in eating, being always harsh, sour, and unpleasant to the taste; but if such stock be removed into a good soil, and grafted with a better kind, it may become a good tree, and yield store of choice and pleasant fruit.

APPLICATION.

Unregenerate men, who never were acquainted with the mystery of spiritual union with Jesus Christ, but still grow on their natural root, old Adam, may, by the force and power of natural principles, bring forth some fruit, which, like the wild hedge-fruit we speak of, may indeed be fair and pleasant to the eyes of men, but God takes no pleasure at all in it; it is sour, harsh and distateful to him, because it springs not from the Spirit of Christ. "I cannot, away with it, it is iniquity," &c. But that I may not entangle

where not being manured and ordered aright, i
wild: So all the fruits of unregenerate men flo
first Adam, a corrupt and degenerate root, he
planted a right seed, but soon turned a wild a
rate plant; he being the root from which eve
turally springs, corrupts all the fruit that any
from him. It is observed by Gregory, perti
present purpose, *Genus humanum in parente p*
in radice putruit; Mankind was putrified in the
first parent. "A corrupt tree cannot bring
fruit."

2. This corrupt root spoils the fruit, by th
sion of its sour and vicious sap into all the br
fruits that grow on them; they suck no oth
ment but what the root affords them, and tha
spoils all: For the same cause and reason no
ral or unregenerate man can ever do one holy
ble action, because the corruption of the root is
actions. The necessity of our drawing corr
all our actions, from this cursed root Adam, is

birth sin. Or, secondly, which speaks to my purpose, it may refer to the action of the same man; man being unclean cannot bring forth a clean thing, (*i. e.*) a clean or holy action: that which is originated is like its original. And that this sour sap of the first stock, I mean Adam's sin, is transmitted into all mankind, not only corrupting their fruit, but ruining and withering all the branches, the apostle shows us in that excellent parallel betwixt the two Adams. *Wherefore, as by one man* [one, not only *in individuo sed in specie*, one representing the whole root or stock] *sin entered into the world;* not by imitation only, but by propagation; and this brought death and ruin upon all the branches.

3. Although these wild hedge-fruits be unwholesome and unpleasant to the taste, yet they are fair and beautiful to the eye: A man that looks upon them, and doth not know what fruit it is, would judge it, by its shew and colour, to be an excellent fruit; for it makes a fairer shew oftentimes than the best and most wholesome fruit doth; even so these natural gifts and endowments, which some unregenerate persons have, seem exceeding fair to the eye and a fruit to be desired. What excellent qualities have some mere natural men and women! what a winning affability, humble condescension, meekness, righteousness, ingenious tenderness, and sweetness of nature! As it was (hyperbolically enough) said of one, *In hoc homine non peccavit Adam:* Adam never sinned in this man; meaning that he excelled the generality of Adam's children in sweetness of temper and natural endowments. What curious phantasies, nimble wits, solid judgments, tenacious memories, rare elocution, &c. are to be found among mere natural men! by which they are assisted in discoursing, praying, preaching and writing to the admiration of such

as know them. But that which is highly esteemed of men, is abomination to God. It finds no acceptance with him, because it springs from that cursed root of nature, and is not the production of his own spirit.

4. If such a stock were removed into a better soil, and grafted with a better kind, it might bring forth fruit pleasant and grateful to the husbandman; and if such persons, before described, were but regenerated and changed in their spirits and principles, what excellent and useful persons would they be in the church of God? and then their fruits would be sweet and acceptable to him. One observes of Tertullian, Origen and Jerome, that they came into Canaan laden with Egyptian gold, (*i. e.*) they came into the church full of excellent human learning, which did Christ much service.

5. When the husbandman cuts down his woods or hedges, he cuts down these crab stocks with the rest, because he values them not any more than the thorns and brambles among which they grow; and as little will God regard or spare these natural branches, how much soever they are laden with such fruit. The threatening is universal. "Except you be regenerate, and born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." And again, *Without holiness no man*, be his natural gifts never so excellent, *shall see God*. Embellished nature is nature still; "that which is born of the flesh is *but* flesh," however it be set off with advantage to the eye of man.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for an accomplished naturalist.

1. To what purpose then do I glory in my natural accomplishments? Though I have a better nature than some others have, yet it is a cursed nature still. These sweet qualities and excellent gifts do only hide, but do not kill the corruption of nature.

I am but a rotten post gilded over, and all my duties but hedge-fruit, which God makes no account of. O cutting thought! that the unlearned shall rise and take heaven, when I, with all my excellent gifts, shall descend into hell. Heaven was not made for scholars, as such, but for believers: As one said, when they were comforting him upon his death-bed, that he was a knowing man, a *doctor of divinity:* O, said he, I shall not appear before God as a *doctor*, but as a man; I shall stand upon a level with the most illiterate in the day of judgment. What doth it avail me that I have a nimble wit, whilst I have none to do myself good? Will my judge be charmed with a rhetorical tongue? Things will not be carried in that world as they are in this. If I could, with Berengarius, discourse *de omni scibile*, of every thing that is knowable, or, with Solomon, unravel nature from the *cedar* to to the *hyssop*, what could this advantage me, as long as I am ignorant of Christ, and the mystery of regeneration? My head hath often ached with study, but when did my heart ache for sin? Methinks, O my soul! thou trimmest up thyself in these natural ornaments to appear before God much as that delicate Agag did, when he was to come before Samuel, and fondly conceits that these things will procure favor, or at least pity from him; but yet think not, for all that, *the bitterness of death is past:* Say not within thyself, will God cast such a one as I into hell? Shall a man of such parts be damned? Alas! justice will hew thee to pieces, as Samuel did that spruce king, and not abate thee the least for these things; many thousand branches of nature, as fair and fruitful as thyself, are now blazing in hell, because not transplanted by regeneration into Christ; and if he spared not them, neither will he spare thee.

2. I am a poor despised shrub, which have no beauty at all in me, and yet such an one hath the Lord chosen to transplant into Christ, whilst he left many fragrant branches standing on their native stock, to be fuel of his wrath to all eternity! O grace! for ever to be admired! Ah! what cause have I to be thankful to free grace, and for ever to walk humbly with my God! the Lord hath therefore chosen an unlikely, rugged, unpolished creature as I am, that pride may forever be hid from mine eyes, and that I may ever glory in his presence. 1 Cor. i. 29. I now have the advantage of a better root and soil than any carnal person hath; it will therefore be a greater shame to me, and a reproach to the root that bears me, if I should be outstripped and excelled by them: yet, Lord, how often do I find it so? I see some of them meek and patient, whilst I am rough and surly; generous and noble, whilst I am base and penurious. Truly such a branch as I am is no honor to the root that bears it.

A reflection for a true, but weak believer.

THE POEM.

I AM a branch of that fair Eden tree,
Which to mankind God hath ordain'd to be
The common stock; his situation good,
His branches many, of himself a wood;
And like a cedar by the river fed,
Unto the clouds his ample branches spread:
Sin smote his root, then justice cut him down,
And levell'd with the earth his lofty crown.

What hope of branches when the tree's o'erturn'd,
But like dry faggots to be bound and burn'd?
It had been so, had not transcendent love,
Which in a sphere above our thoughts doth move,
Prepar'd a better stock to save and nourish
Transplanted twigs, which in him thrive and flourish.
In Adam all are curs'd; no saving fruit
Shall ever spring from that sin-blasted root:
Yea, all the branches that in him are found,
How flourishing soever, must be bound
And pil'd together, (horrid news to tell!)
To make an everlasting blaze in hell.
God takes no pleasure in the sweetest bud
Disclos'd by nature, for the root's not good.
Some boughs indeed richly adorned are
With natural fruits, which to the eye are fair;
Rare gifts, sweet dispositions, which attract
The love of thousands, and from most exact
Honor and admiration. You'll admire
That such as these are fuel for the fire.
Indeed, ten thousand pities 'tis to see
Such lovely creatures in this case to be.
Did they by true regeneration draw
The sap of life from Jesse's root, the law,
By which they now to wrath condemned are,
Would cease to curse, and God such buds would spare.
But out of him there's none of these can move
His unrelenting heart, or draw his love.
Then cut me off from this accursed tree,
Lest I for ever be cut off from thee.

CHAPTER II.

UPON THE UNION OF THE GRAFT WITH THE STOCK.

Whene'er you bud and graft, therein you see
How Christ and souls must here united be.

OBSERVATION.

When the husbandman hath prepared his grafts in the season of the year, he carries them, with the tools that are necessary for that work, to the tree or stock he intends to ingraft, and having cut off the top of the limb in some smooth part, he cleaves it with his knife or chisel a little beside the pith, knocks in his wedge to keep it open; then, having prepared the graft, he carefully sets it into the cleft, joining the inner side of the barks of graft and stock together, there being the main current of the sap; then pulls out his wedge, binds both together, as in barking, and clays it up, to defend the tender graft and wounded stock from the injuries of the sun and rain.

These tender scions quickly take hold of the stock, and having immediate coalition with it, drink in its sap, concoct it into their own nourishment, thrive better, and bear more and better fruits than ever they would have done upon their natural root; yea, the smallest bud, being carefully inoculated and bound close to the stock, will, in a short time, become a flourishing and a fruitful limb.

APPLICATION.

This carries a most sweet and lively resemblance of the soul's union with Christ by faith; and indeed there is nothing in nature that shadows forth this great gospel-mystery like it: it is a thousand pities that any who are employed about, or are but spectators of such an action,

ould terminate their thoughts, as too many do, in that ıtural object, and not raise up their hearts to these ɜavenly meditations which it so fairly offers them.

1. When a twig is to be ingrafted, or a bud inoculated, is first cut off by a keen knife from the tree on which it ıturally grew.

And when the Lord intends to graft a soul into Christ, ıe first work about it is cutting work, Acts ii. 37. their ɜarts were cut by conviction and deep compunction; no ɜion is ingrafted without cutting—no soul united with hrist without a cutting sense of sin and misery. John ri. 8, 9.

2. When the tender shoot is cut off from the tree, ɜere are, ordinarily, many more left behind upon the me tree, as promising and vigorous as that which is ken; but it pleaseth the husbandman to choose this and ave them.

Even so it is in the removing or transplanting of a soul r conversion; it leaves many behind it in the state of ıture as likely and promising as itself; but so it pleaseth od to take this soul and leave many others; yea, often ıch as grew upon the same root, I mean the immediate arent. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the ord; yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."

3. When the grafts are cut off, in order to this work, it a critical season with them: If they lie too long before ıey are ingrafted, or take not with the stock, they die, ɔd are never more to be recovered: they may stand in ıe stock awhile, but are no part of the tree.

So when souls are under a work of conviction, it is a ritical time with them; many a one have I known then ɔ miscarry, and never recovered again; they have in- eed for a time stood like dead grafts in the stock, by an

external dead-hearted profession, but never came to any thing; and as such dead grafts either fall off from the stock, or moulder away upon it, so do these. 1 John ii. 19.

4. The husbandman, when he hath cut off grafts, or tender-buds, makes all the convenient speed he can to close them with the stock; the sooner that is done, the better; they get no good by remaining as they are. And truly it concerns the servants of the Lord, who are employed in this work of ingrafting souls into Christ, to make all the haste they can to bring the convicted sinner to a closure with Christ. As soon as ever the trembling jailor cried, "What shall I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas immediately directed him to Christ. They do not say, It is too soon for thee to act faith on Christ, thou art not yet humbled enough, but "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

5. There must be an incision made in the stock before any bud can be inoculated; or the stock must be cut and cleaved, before the scion can be ingrafted; according to that in the poet,

Venerit insitio, fac ramum ramus ad optet; (i. e.)
To grafts no living sap the stock impart,
Unless you wound and cut them near the heart.

Such an incision, or wound, was made upon Christ, in order to our ingrafting into him, John xix. 34. The opening of that deadly wound gives life to the souls of believers.

6. The graft is intimately united, and closely conjoined with the stock; the conjunction is so close, that they become one tree.

There is also a most close and intimate union betwixt Christ and the soul that believeth in him. It is emphatically expressed by the apostle, "He that is joined to the

ord is one spirit." The word imports the nearest, losest and strictest union. Christ and the soul cleave ogether in a blessed oneness, as those things do that are ined one to another; so that look as the graft is really in he stock, and the spirit or sap of the stock is really in the raft; so a believer is really, though mystically in Christ, nd the spirit of Christ is really communicated to a be-iever. "I live," saith Paul, "yet not I, but Christ iveth in me." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

7. Grafts are bound to the stock by bands made of hay r flags; these keep it steady, else the wind would loose t out of the stock.

The believing soul is also fastened to Christ by bands, which will secure it from all danger of being loosed off rom him any more. There are two bands of this union; he SPIRIT on God's part; this is the firm bond of union, without which he could never be made one with Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of is;" and FAITH on our part. "That Christ may dwell n your hearts by faith." These hold strongly.

8. Though the stock be one and the same, yet all grafts o not thrive and flourish alike in it; some outgrow the est, and those that grow not so well as the others do, he fault is in them, and not in the stock; so it is with ouls really united to Christ; all do not flourish alike in im, the faith of some grows exceedingly, 2 Thes. i. 3, he things that be in others are ready to die, Rev. iii. 2. nd such souls must charge the fault upon themselves. Christ sends up living sap enough, not only to make all hat are in him living, but fruitful branches.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Is it so indeed betwixt Christ and my soul, as it is



is but a little while since I was a wild and cu
growing in the wilderness among them that sl
be cut down and faggotted up for hell ; for me
from amongst them, and planted into Christ.
fall down and kiss the feet of free grace, tha
freely towards so vile a creature! The di
honors of the kings and nobles of the earth are
mine. It was truly confessed by one of them,
greater honor to be a member of Christ, than
an empire. Do I say, a greater honor than i
the kings of the earth ? I might have said, it
honor than is put upon the angels of heaven
which of them said Christ, at any time, thou
my bone, and flesh of my flesh ? Behold wha
love is this !"

2. Look again upon the ingrafted scions, (
and thou shalt find, that when once they have
of the stock, they live as long as there is any
root ; and because he liveth, I shall live al
life is hid with Christ in God. The graft is p
the stock, and my soul is even so. " preserve

4. Once more, draw matter of instruction, as well as comfort, from this sweet observation: Seeing God hath put all this honor upon thee, by this most intimate union with his Christ, look to it, my soul, that thou live and walk as becomes a soul thus one with the Lord; be thou tender over his glory; doth not that which strikes at the root strike at the very life of the graft? And shall not that which strikes at the very glory of Christ tenderly touch and affect thee? Yea, be thou tenderly affected with all the reproaches that fall upon him from abroad, but especially with those that redound to him from thine own unfruitfulness. Oh! disgrace not the root that bears thee! Let it never be said, that any evil fruit is found upon a branch that lives and is fed by such a root.

THE POEM.

Oh! what considering serious man can see
The close conjunction of the graft and tree;
And whilst he contemplates, he doth not find
This meditation grafted on his mind?
I am the branch, and Christ the vine;
Thy gracious hand did pluck
Me from that native stock of mine,
That I his sap might suck.
The bloody spear did in his heart
A deep incision make,
That grace to me he might impart,
And I thereof partake,
The Spirit and faith is that firm band
Which binds us fast together;

Thus we are clasped hand in hand,
And nothing can us sever.
Bless'd be that hand which did remove
Me from my native place!
This was the wonder of thy love,
The triumph of thy grace!
That I, a wild and cursed plant,
Should thus preferred be,
Who all these ornaments do want,
Thou may'st in others see.
As long as e'er the root doth live,
The branches are not dry;
Whilst Christ hath grace and life to give,
My soul can never die.
O blessed Saviour! never could
A graft cleave to the tree
More close than thy poor creature would
United be with thee.
My soul, dishonor not the root,
'Twill be a shame for thee
To want the choicest sorts of fruit,
And yet thus grafted be.
Thus you may shake from grafts, before they blow,
More precious fruit than e'er on trees did grow.

CHAPTER III.

UPON THE GATHERING IN OF FRUITS IN AUTUMN.

When trees are shak'd but little fruit remains,
Just such a remnant to the Lord pertains.

OBSERVATION.

It is a pleasant sight in autumn to see the fruitful branches hanging full of clusters, which weigh the bough to the ground.

Aspice curvatos pomorum pondere ramos,
Ut sua quod peperit vix ferat arbor onus.

Which I may thus English,

O what a pleasant sight it is to see,
The fruitful clusters bowing down the tree!

But these laden branches are soon eased of their burden; for as soon as they are ripe, the husbandman ascends the tree, and shaking the limbs with all his might, causes a fruitful shower to fall like hail-stones upon the ground below; which being gathered to a heap, are carried to the pound, broken all to pieces in a trough, and squeezed to a dry lump in the press, whence all their juice and moisture runs into the fat. How few escape this fat of all those multitudes that grow in the orchard? If you look upon the trees, you may possibly see here one, and there another, two or three upon the utmost branches, but nothing in comparison to the vast number that are thus used.

APPLICATION.

This small remains of fruit, which are either left upon the tree, or gathered in for an hoard, do well resemble that small number of God's elect in the world, which free grace hath reserved out of the general ruin of mankind.

Four things are excellently shadowed forth to u similitude.

1. You see in a fruitful autumn, the trees even ed and over laden with the weight of their own fi fore the shaking time comes, and then they are their burden. Thus, the whole creation groa the weight of their sins who inhabit it, Rom. viii creatures are in bondage, and by an elegant pros are said, both to groan and wait for deliveranc original sin of man brought an original curse, wh dens the creature. " Cursed is the ground for th and the actual sin of man brings actual curses t creature. Psalm cvii. 34. Thus the inhabitant world load and burden it, as the limbs of a tree are ed, and sometimes broken with the weight of th fruit.

2. You may observe in your orchards every ye abundance of fruits daily fall, either by storms, o own accord; but when the shaking time comes, ground is covered all over with fruit. Thus it is world, that mystical tree, with respect to men tha it; there is not a year, a day, or hour, in which se not, as it were, of their own accord, by a natura and sometimes wars, and epidemical plagues bl thousands together into their graves; these are winds in a fruitful orchard; but when the shaki the autumn of the world, comes, then all its inh shall be shaken down together, either by death, or lation equivalent thereunto.

3. When fruits are shaken down from their tre the husbandman separates them; the far greater the pound, and some few reserves for an hoard, wh brought to his table, and eaten with pleasure. T

cellently shadows forth that great separation, which Christ will make in the end of the world, when some shall be cast into the wine press of the Almighty's wrath, and others preserved for glory.

4. Those fruits which are preserved on the tree, or in the hoard, are comparatively but an handful to those that are broken in the pound; alas! it is scarce one of a thousand, and such a small remnant of elected souls hath God reserved for glory.

I look upon the world as a great tree, consisting of four large limbs or branches; this branch or division of it on which we grow, hath doubtless, a greater number of God's elect upon it than the other three; and yet, when I look with a serious and considering eye upon this fruitful European branch, and see how much rotten and withered fruit there grows upon it, it makes me say, as Chrysostom did of his populous Antioch; Ah, how small a remnant hath Jesus Christ among these vast numbers! "Many indeed are called, but ah! how few are chosen?" Alas! they are but as the gleanings when the vintage is done; here and there one upon its utmost branches: to allude to that, Isaiah xvii. 6. It was a sad observation which that searching scholar, Mr. Brerewood, long since made upon the world; that, dividing it into thirty equal parts, he found no less than nineteen of them wholly overspread with idolatry, and heathenish darkness: and of the eleven remaining parts, no less than six are Mahometans: so that there remains but five of thirty which profess the Christian religion at large: and the far greater part of these remaining five are enveloped and drowned in popish darkness; so that you see the reformed protestant religion is confined to a small spot of ground indeed. Now, if from these we subtract all the grossly ignorant, openly profane,

merely civil, and secretly hypocritical, judge, then, for yourselves, how small a scantling of the world falls to Christ's share.

Well might Christ say, "Narrow is the way, and strait is the gate that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." And again, "Fear not, little flock." The larger piece goes to the devil; a little remnant is Christ's. Rom. ix. 27. Saints in scripture are called *jewels*. Mal. iii. 17. Precious pearls and diamonds, which the Latins call *unones*. *Quia nulli duo simul reperiuntur*, saith Pliny, because nature gives them not by pairs, but one by one; how many pebbles to one pearl! Suitable to this notion is that complaint of the prophet. "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; my soul desireth the first ripe fruits; the good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none," (i. e. none comparatively) *upright among men*. The prophet alludes to a poor hungry man, that, after the gathering time is past, comes into an orchard desiring some choice fruit to eat: but, alas! he finds none; there is no cluster; possibly here and there one after the shaking time. True saints are the world's rarities.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for one that follows the example of the multitude.

1. What then will be my lot, when that great shaking time shall come, who have followed the multitude, and gone with the tide of the world? How, even when I have been pressed to strictness and singular diligence in the matters of salvation, and told what a narrow way the way of life is, have I put it off with this? If it be so, then woe to thousands! Ah, foolish heart! Thousands, and ten thousands

all be woeful and miserable indeed to all eternity! Will be any mitigation of my misery, that I shall have thousands of miserable companions with me in hell? Or, will be admitted for a good plea at the judgment-seat, Lord, did as the generality of my neighbors in the world did; except it were here and there a more precise person, I saw none but lived as I lived. Ah, foolish sinner! is it not better to go to heaven alone, than to hell with company? The worst courses have always the most imitators, and the road to destruction is thronged with passengers.

2. And how little better is my condition, who have often sheltered the wickedness of my own heart upon the encouragement of mercy? Thus hath my heart pleaded against mercifulness and duty; God is a merciful God, and will not be so severe with the world, to damn so many thousands as are in my condition. Deluded soul! if God had damned the whole race of Adam, he had done them no more wrong; yea, there is more mercy in saving but one man, than there is of severity and rigor in damning all. How many drunkards and adulterers have lived and died with thy plea in their mouths, *God is a merciful God?* But yet his word expressly saith, "Be not deceived; such shall not inherit the kingdom of God." God, indeed, is a God of infinite mercy; but he will never exercise his mercy to the prejudice of his truth.

A reflection for an abuser of mercy.

3. Oh! what rich grace is here, that in a general shipwreck *mercy* should cast forth a line or plank to save me! That when millions perish, I, with a few more, should escape that perdition! Was it the Father's good pleasure to bestow the kingdom upon a little flock, and to make me one of that number? What singular obli-

A reflection for an elect soul.

gations hath *mercy* put upon my soul! The fewer are saved, the more cause have they that are to admire their salvation. If but one of a thousand had been damned, yet my salvation would have been an act of infinite grace; but when scarce one of a thousand are saved, what shall I call that grace that cast my lot amongst them.

CHAPTER IV.

UPON THE CUTTING DOWN OF DEAD TREES.

Dead barren trees you for the fire prepare;
In such a case all fruitless persons are.

OBSERVATION.

After many years patience, in the use of all means to recover a fruit tree, if the husbandman see it be quite dead, and that there can be no more expectation of any fruit from it, he brings his ax, and hews it down by the root; and from the orchard it is carried to the fire, it being then fit for nothing else; he reckons it imprudent to let such a useless tree abide in good ground, where another may be planted in its room, that will better pay for the ground it stands in. I myself once saw a large orchard of fair but fruitless trees, all rooted up, rived abroad, and ricked up for the fire.

APPLICATION.

Thus deals the Lord by useless and barren professors who do but cumber his ground. "And now also the ax is laid to the root of the trees; therefore every tree that brings not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." "Then said the dresser of the vineyard, Behold,

ese three years I came seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and
d none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"
hese three years, alluding to the time of his ministry, he
ing at that time entering upon the last half year, as one
bserves, by harmonizing the evangelist; so long he had
aited for the fruit of his ministry among those dead-
earted Jews; now his patience is even at an end; cut
em down, saith he, why cumber they the ground? I will
lant others, *viz.* the Gentiles, in their room. This hew-
g down of the barren tree doth, in a lively manner, sha-
ow forth God's judicial proceedings against formal and
mpty professors under the gospel; and the resemblance
olds good in these following particulars:

1. The tree that is to be hewn down for the fire stands
the orchard among other flourishing trees, where it
ath enjoyed the benefit of a good soil, a strong fence, and
uch culture: but being barren, these privileges secure
not from the fire. It is not our standing in the visible
urch by a powerless profession among real saints with
om we have been associated, and enjoyed the rich and
cellent waterings of ordinances, that can secure us from
e wrath of God. "Bring forth fruits meet for repen-
nce, and think not to say within yourselves, we have
braham to our father." Neither Abraham, nor Abra-
m's God, will acknowledge such degenerate children; if
braham's faith be not in your hearts, it will be no advan-
ge that Abraham's blood runs in your veins. It will be
poor plea for Ju as, when he shall stand before Christ
judgment, to say, Lord, I was one of thy family, I preach-
I for thee; I did eat and drink in thy presence. Let
ese scriptures be consulted, Matth. vii. 22. Matth. xxv.
I, 12. Rom. ii. 17 and 25.

2. The husbandman doth not presently cut down the

tree because it puts not forth as soon as other trees do, but waits as long as there is any hope, and then cuts it down. Thus doth God wait upon barren, dead-hearted persons, from sabbath to sabbath, and from year to year; for the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Thus the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah upon those dry trees, who are now smokeing and flaming in hell. 1 Pet. iii. 29. He waits long on sinners, but keeps exact accounts of every year and day of his patience. Luke xiii. 7. "These three years." And Jer. xxv. 3. "These twenty-three years."

3. When the time is come to cut it down, the dead tree cannot possibly resist the stroke of the ax; but receives the blow, and falls before it. No more can the stoutest sinner resist the fatal stroke by death, by which the Lord hews him down. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war." When the pale horse comes, away you must into the land of darkness. Though thou cry, with Adrian, O my poor soul! whither art thou going? Die thou must, thou barren professor; though it were better for thee to do any thing else than to die. What a dreadful shriek will thy conscience give, when it sees the ax at thy root, and say to thee, as it is, Ezek. vii. 6. "An end is come, the end is come; it watcheth for thee; behold it is come." Oh! saith Henry Beauford, that rich and wretched cardinal, bishop of Winchester, and chancellor of England, when he perceived whereto he must, wherefore must I die? If the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. Fie, quoth he, will not death be hired? Will riches do nothing? No, neither riches nor policy can then avail.

4. The side to which the tree leaned most while it stood, that way it will fall when it is cut down; and as it falls, so it lies, whether to the south or north. So it fares with these mystical trees, I mean fruitless professors: Had their hearts and affections inclined and bended heaven-ward whilst they lived, that way, no doubt, they had fallen at their death; but as their hearts inclined to sin, and even bended to the world, so when God gives the fatal stroke, they must fall hell-ward, and wrath-ward; and how dreadful will such a fall be!

5. When the dead tree is carried out of the orchard, it shall never be among the living trees of the orchard any more; many years it grew among them, but now it shall never have a place there again. And when the barren professor is carried out of the world by death, he shall never be associated with the saints any more: He may then say, farewell all ye saints, among whom I lived, and with whom I so often heard, fasted and prayed: I shall never see your face more. "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and west, and north, and south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth into utter darkness, there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

6. When the dead tree is carried out of the orchard, the husbandman cuts off its branches, and rives it asunder with his wedges. This also is the lot of barren professors. The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and will cut him asunder; he shall be dissected, or cut asunder.

Now, therefore, "consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear, or rend you in pieces." O direful day! when the same hand that planteth, pruned and watered thee so

long, and so tenderly, shall now strike mortal strokes at thee, and that without pity! "For he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will show them no favor." For the day of mercy is over, and the day of his wrath is fully come.

7. When this tree is cleaved asunder, then its rotten hollow inside appears, which was the cause of its barrenness; it looked like a fair and sound-bodied tree, but now all may see how rotten it is at the heart; so will God in that day, when he shall dissect the barren professor, discover the rottenness of his heart, and unsoundness of his principles and ends: Then they who never suspected him before, shall see what a hollow and rotten-hearted professor he was.

8. Lastly, The fruitless tree is cast into the fire. This also is the end and sad issue of formality. "He is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This is an undoubted truth, that there is no plant in God's vineyard but he will have glory from it, by bearing fruit, or glory on it, by burning in the fire. In this fire shall they lie "gnashing their teeth," and that both in indignation against the saints, whom they shall see in glory, and against Jesus Christ, who would not save them, and against themselves for losing so foolishly the opportunities of salvation. Do you behold, when you sit by the fire, the froth that boils out of those flaming logs? O think of the foam and rage of those undone creatures, foaming and gnashing their teeth in that fire which is not quenched! Mark ix. 14.

REFLECTION.

A reflection for a formal hypocrite.

How often have I passed by such barren trees with a more barren heart, as little thinking such a tree to be the *emblem* of myself, as Nebuchadnezzar did when he saw that

ee in a dream, which represented himself, and shadowd forth to him his ensuing misery. But, O my conience! my drowsy, sleepy conscience! wert thou but nder and faithful to me, thou wouldst make as round nd terrible an application of such a spectacle to me, as he faithful prophet did to him. And thus wouldst thou, my soul, bemoan thy condition.

Poor wretch! here I grow, for a little time, among the rees of righteousness, the plants of renown, but I am none f them; I was never planted a right seed; some green nd flourishing leaves of profession, indeed, I have, which eceive others, but God cannot be deceived; he sees I m fruitless and rotten at the heart. Poor soul! what will hine end be but burning? Behold, the ax lieth by thy oot; and wonder it is, that there it should lie so long, and yet standing! Still mercy pleads for a fruitless creature: ord, spare it one year longer. Alas! he need strike no reat blow to ruin me; his very breath blows to destruction. A frown of his face can blast and ruin me. Psalm xxx. 6. He is daily solicited by his justice to hew me own, and yet I stand. Lord, cure my barrenness! I now thou hadst rather see the fruit than fire upon me.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

PON THE HUSBANDMAN'S CARE FOR HIS CATTLE.

More care for horse and oxen many take,
Than for their souls, or dearest children's sake.

OBSERVATION.

MANY husbandmen are excessively careful about their attle, rising themselves early, or causing their servants rise betimes, to provender and dress them. Much me is spent in some countries in trimming and adorning eir horses with curious trappings and plumes of feathrs; and if at any time their beasts be sick, what care is ken to recover and heal them: you will be sure they hall want nothing that is necessary for them; yea, many ill choose rather to want themselves, than suffer their orses so to do; and take a great deal of comfort to see em thrive and prosper under their hands.

APPLICATION.

What one said of bloody Herod, who slew so many ildren at Bethlehem, That it were better to be his ine than his son, may truly enough be applied to some rents and masters, who take less care for saving the ils of their children and servants, than they do for the dies of those beasts which daily feed at their stalls and

cribs. Many there be who do in reference to their souls, as Jacob did with respect to the preservation of their bodies, when he put all the herds of cattle before, and his wives and little ones behind, as he went to meet his brother Esau. It is a weighty saying of a grave * author: "It is vile ingratitude to rejoice when cattle multiply, and repine when children increase; it is heathenish distrustfulness to fear that he who provides for your beasts, will not provide for your children; and it is no less than unnatural cruelty to be careful of the bodies of beasts, and careless of the souls of children." Let us but a little compare your care and diligence in both respects, and see, in a few particulars, whether you do indeed value your own, or your children and servants' souls, as you do the life and health of a beast.

1. Your care for your very horses is expressed early, whilst they are but colts, and not come to do you any service; you are willing to be at pains and cost to have them broken and brought to their way. This is more than ever many of them do for their children; they can see them wild and profane, naturally taking a stroke or way of wickedness, but yet never were at any pains or cost to break them; these must be fondled and indulged in the natural way of their own corruption and wickedness, and not a rod or reproof used to break them of it.

It is observed of the Persians,† that they put out their children to school as soon as they can speak, and will not see them in seven years after, lest their indulgence should do them hurt.

2. You keep your constant set times, *morning* and *eve-*

* Jenk. on Jude, part ii. p. 170.

† Clark's Mir. page 506.

sing, to feed, water and dress your cattle, and will by no means neglect it once: but how many times have you neglected *morning* and *evening* duties in your families? Yea, how many be there, whose very tables, in respect of any worship God hath there, do very little differ from the very cribs and mangers at which their horses feed? As soon as you are up in a morning, you are with your beasts, before you have been with your God. How little do such differ from beasts? And happy were it, if they were no more accountable to God than their beasts are.

The end of your care, cost and pains about your cattle is, that they may be strong for labor, and the more serviceable to you: thus you comply with the end of their beings. But how rare a thing is it to find these men as careful to fit their posterity to be useful and serviceable to God in their generations, which is the end of their beings? If you can make them rich, and provide good matches for them, you reckon that you have fully discharged the duty of parents: If they will learn to hold the plough, that you are willing to teach them; but, when did you spend an hour to teach them the way of salvation?

Now to convince such careless parents of the heinousness of their sin, let these queries be solemnly considered.

Qu. 1. Whether this be a sufficient discharge of that great duty which God hath laid upon Christian parents in reference to their families? That God hath charged them with the souls of their families, is undeniable. Deut. vi. 6, 7. Eph. vi. 4. If God had not cloathed you with his authority, to command them in the way of the Lord, he would never have charged them so strictly to yield you obedience as he has done. Eph. vi. 1. Col. iii. 20. Well, a great trust is reposed in you, look to your duty; for, without dispute, you shall answer for it.

Qu. 2. Whether it be likely, if the time of youth, which is the moulding age, be neglected, they will be wrought upon to any good afterwards ? Husbandmen, let me put a sensible case to you : Do you not see, in your very horses, that whilst they are young, you can bring them to any way ; but if once they have got a false stroke, and by long custom it be grown natural to them, then there is no breaking them of it : yea, you see it in your very orchards ; you may bring a tender twig to grow in what form you please, but when it is grown to a sturdy limb, there is no bending it afterwards to any other form than what it naturally took. Thus it is with children. Prov. xxii. 6. " Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Qu. 3. Whether, if you neglect to instruct them in the way of the Lord, Satan, and their own natural corruptions will not instruct them in the way to hell ? Consider this, ye careless parents ; if you will not teach your children, the devil will teach them ; if you shew them not how to pray, he will shew them how to curse and swear, and take the name of the Lord in vain : If you grudge time and pains about their souls, the devil doth not. Oh ! it is a sad consideration, that so many children should be put to school to the devil.

Qu. 4. What comfort are you like to have from them when they are old, if you bring them not up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, when they are young ! Many parents have lived to reap, in their old age, the fruit of their own folly and carelessness, in the loose and vain education of their children. By Lycurgus' law, no parent was to be relieved by his children in age, if he gave them not good education in their youth ; and it is law at this day among the Switzers, that if any child b

condemned to die for a capital offence, the parents of that child are to be his executioners; these laws were made to provoke parents to look better to their charge. Believe this as an undoubted truth, that that child which becomes, through thy default, an instrument to dishonor God, shall prove, sooner or later, a son or daughter of sorrow to thee.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for careless parents.

1. God hath found out my sin this day. This hath been my practice ever since I had a family committed to my charge; I have spent more time and pains about the bodies of my beasts, than the souls of my children:—Beast that I am for so doing! little have I considered the preciousness of my own or their immortal souls. How careful have I been to provide fodder to preserve my cattle in the winter, whilst I leave my own and their souls to perish through eternity, and make no provision for them? Surely my children will one day curse the time that ever they were born unto such a cruel father, or of such a merciless mother. Should I bring home the plague into my family, and live to see all my poor children lie dead by the walls; if I had not the heart of a tyger, such a sight would melt my heart; and yet the death of their souls, by the sin which I propagated to them, affects me not. Ah! that I could say, I had done as much for them, as I have done for a beast that perisheth!

A reflection for the disobedient child of a gracious parent.

2. But, unhappy wretch that I am! God cast a better lot for me; I am the offspring of *religious* and tender parents, who have always deeply concerned themselves in the everlasting *state of my soul; many prayers and* tears have they

poured out to God for me, both in my hearing, as well as in secret; many holy and wholesome counsels have they, from time to time, dropt upon me; many precious examples have they set in their own practice before me; many a time, when I have sinned against the Lord, have they stood over me, with a rod in their hands, and tears in their eyes, using all means to reclaim me; but, like an ungracious wretch, I have slighted all their counsel, grieved their hearts, and imbittered their lives by my sinful courses. Ah, my soul! thou art a degenerate plant; better will it be with the offspring of infidels than with thee, if repentance prevent not: Now I live in one family with them, but shortly I shall be separated from them, as far as hell is from heaven; they now tenderly pity my misery, but then they shall approve and applaud the righteous sentence of Christ upon me; so little privilege shall I then have from my relation to them, that they shall be produced as witnesses against me, and all their rejected counsels, reproofs and examples charged home upon me, as the aggravations of my wickedness; and better it will be, when it shall come to that, that I had been brought forth by a beast, than sprung from the loins of such parents.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE HARD LABOR AND CRUEL USAGE OF BEASTS.

When under loads your beasts do groan, think then
How great a mercy 'tis that you are men.

OBSERVATION.

THOUGH some men be excessively careful and tender
er their beasts, as was noted in the former chapter;
t others are cruel and merciless towards them, not re-
rding how they ride or burden them. How often have
een them fainting under their loads, wrought off their
gs, and turned out with galled backs, into the fields or
ghways to shift for a little grass; many times have I
ard and pitied them, groaning under unreasonable bur-
ns, and beaten on by merciless drivers, till at last, by
ch cruel usage, they have been destroyed, and then
st into a ditch for dogs' meat.

APPLICATION.

Such sights as these should make men thankful for the
ercy of their creation, and bless their bountiful Crea-
r, that they were not made such creatures themselves.
me beasts are made *ad esum*, only for food, being no
herwise useful to man, as *swine*, &c. These are only
d for slaughter; we kill and eat them, and regard not
eir cries and strugglings when the knife is thrust to
eir very hearts! others are only *ad usum*, for service,
hilst living, but unprofitable when dead, as *horses;* these
e make to drudge and toil for us from day to day, but
ll them not; others are both *ad esum et usum*, for food
ıen dead, and service whilst alive, as the ox; these we

thankful that they are not brought into the lo
tion of creatures, and to bless God that they c
creature below themselves, gives us a famous
the following story: Two *cardinals*, saith he,
great deal of pomp to the council of Consta
way heard a man in the fields, weeping and w
terly; they rode to him, and asked him wha
Perceiving his eye intently fixed upon an ug
told them that his heart melted with the cons
this mercy, that God had not made him such
and loathsome creature, though he were for
the same clay with it: *Hoc est quod amare fl*
this is that which makes me weep bitterly.
one of the cardinals cries out, well, said the
unlearned will rise and take heaven, when we
learning shall be thrust into hell. That wh
the heart of this poor man, should melt every
we behold the misery to which these poor cr
subjected. And this will appear a mercy o
consideration, if we but draw a comparison b
selves and these irrational creatures, in these

lies is much more excellent; God made other good creatures by a word of command, but man by counsel; it was not, Be thou; but, "Let us make man." We might have been made stones without sense, or beasts without reason, but we were made men. The noble structure and symmetry of our bodies invite our souls not only to thankfulness, but admiration. David, speaking of the curious frame of the body, saith, "I am wonderfully made," or, as the Vulgate reads it, painted as with a needle, like some rich piece of needle-work curiously embroidered with nerves and veins. Was any part of the common lump of clay thus fashioned? Galen gave Epicurus an hundred years time to imagine a more commodious situation, configuration, or composition of any one part of a human body; and (as one saith) if all the angels in heaven had studied to this day, they could not have cast the body of man into a more curious mould.

2. How little ease or rest have they? They live not many years, and those who do are in bondage and misery, groaning under the effects of sin; but God hath provided better for us even as to our outward condition in the world; we have the more rest, because they have so little. How many refreshments and comforts hath God provided for us, of which they are incapable? If we be weary with labor, we can take our rest; but fresh or weary, they must stand to it, or sink under it from day to day.

3. What a narrow capacity hath God given to beasts! What a large capacity to man! Alas, they are only capable of a little sensitive pleasure; as you shall see sometimes, how they will frisk in a green pasture; this is all they be capable of, and this death puts an end to: but how comprehensive are our souls in their capacities! We

are made in the image of God; we can look beyond present things, and are capable of the highest happiness, and that to all eternity: The soul of a beast is but a material form, which, wholly depending upon, must needs die with the body; but our souls are a divine spark or blast, and when the body dies, it dies not with it, but subsists even in its separated state.

A reflection for an unthankful sinner.

1. How great a sin is ingratitude to God, for such a common, but choice mercy of creation and provision for me in this world! There is no creature made worse by kindness but man. There is a kind of gratitude which I may observe even in these brute beasts; they do in their way acknowledge their benefactors: "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib." How ready are they to serve such as feed and cherish them? But I have been both unthankful and unserviceable to my Creator and Benefactor, that hath done me good all my days: Those poor creatures that sweat and groan under the load that I lay upon them, never sinned against God, nor transgressed the laws of their creation, as I have done, and yet God hath dealt better with me than with them. O that the bounty of God, and his distinguishing mercy between me and the beasts that perish might move and melt my heart into thankfulness! O that I might consider seriously what the higher and more excellent end of my creation is, and might more endeavor to answer and live up to it! or else, O my soul! it will be worse with thee than with the beasts: It is true, they are under bondage and misery, but it is but for a little time; death will end all their pains, and ease them of all their heavy loads, but I shall groan through all eternity under a heavier burden than ever they felt; they have

no account to give, but I have. What comfort is it that I have a larger capacity than a beast hath? That God hath endowed me with reason, which is denied to them? Alas! this will but augment my misery, and enlarge me to take in a greater measure of anguish.

A reflection for an elect soul.

2. But how many steps, O my soul! mayest thou ascend in the praises of thy God, when thou considerest the mercies that God hath bestowed upon thee; not only in that he made thee not a stone or tree without sense, or an horse or dog without reason; but that thou art not an infidel without light, or an unregenerate person without grace? What! to have sense, and all the delights of it, which stones have not! Reason, with the most high and noble pleasures of it, which beasts have not; the light and knowledge of the great things of the gospel, which the heathens have not! and such an expectation and hope of inconceivable glory and felicity, which the unsanctified have not! O my soul! how rich—how bountiful hath thy God been to thee! These are the overflowings of his love to thee, who was moulded out of the same lump with the *beasts* that groan on earth; yea, with the damned that howl in hell: Well may I say, that God hath been a good God to me!

OBSERVATION.

When cattle are strayed away from your use all care and diligence to recover them aga their footsteps, crying them in the market tow your servants abroad, and inquiring yourselv you think can give news of them. What car men will take in such cases, was exemplifi 1 Sam. ix. 4, 5. who, with his servant, pass mount Ephraim, to seek the asses that were s his father, and through the land of Shalisha, the land of Shalim, and they were not there, the land of the Benjamites, but found them no

APPLICATION.

The care and pains you take to recover y tle, carries a sweet and lively representation o Jesus Christ, in the recovery of lost sinners. came on purpose from heaven upon a like err and to save that which was lost. Matth. xviii. are several particulars in which this glorio Christ in seeking and saving lost man, and th

they want nothing that is needful for them. Just so lost man departed from his God, brake out of that pleasant enclosure where he was abundantly provided for, both as to soul and body; yet then he brake over the hedge of the command, and went astray. *Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright, but he sought out to himself many inventions:* he was not content and satisfied with that blessed state God had put him into, but would be trying new conclusions, to the loss and ruin both of himself and his posterity.

2. Strayers are evermore sufferers by it; all they get by it, is to be pinned and pounded: And what did man get by departing from his God, but ruin and misery to soul and body? Will you have an abbreviate of his sufferings and losses? The full account none can give you: Why, by straying from his God, he lost the rectitude and holiness of his nature; like a true strayer, he is all dirty and miry, overspread and besmeared both in soul and body with the odious filthiness of sin; he lost the liberty and freedom of his will to good, a precious jewel of inestimable value. This is a real misery incurred by the fall, though some have so far lost their understandings and humility, as not to own it; he hath lost his God—his soul—his happiness, and his very bowels of compassion towards himself in this miserable state.

3. When your cattle are strayed, yea, though it be but one of the flock or herd, you leave all the rest and go after that which is lost; so did Jesus Christ, who, in the forecited place, compares himself to such a shepherd; he left heaven itself, and all the blessed angels there, to come into this world to seek lost man. O the precious esteem and dear love that Christ hath to poor man! How did his bowels yearn towards us in our low state!—

How did he pity us in our misery! as if he had said, poor creatures, they have lost themselves, and are become a prey to the devil in a perishing state; I will seek after them, and save them. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save.

4. You are glad when you have found your strayers; much more is Christ when he hath found a lost soul. O it is a great satisfaction to him to see the fruit of the travail of his soul. "Yea, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance." What demonstrations of joy and gladness did the father of the prodigal give, when he had found his son that was lost.

5. When you have brought home your strayers, you sometimes clog them, to prevent their wandering again, and stop up the gaps with thorns; and so doth God oftentimes, by such souls as are recovered and brought home to Christ; he hangs a clog of affliction to prevent their departure from God again. 2 Cor. xii. 7.

But then there are five particulars in which Christ's seeking lost souls, and your seeking lost cattle differ.

1. Your cattle sometimes find the way home themselves, and return to you of their own accord, but lost man never did, nor can do so; he was his own destroyer, but can never be his own saviour; it was possible for him not to have lost his God, but having once lost him, can never find him again of himself. Alas! his heart is bent to backsliding, he hath no will to return. Hear how Christ complains. "Ye will not come unto me." Man's recovery begins in God, not in himself.

2. Your servants can find and bring back your lost cattle as well as you, but so cannot Christ's servants: Ministers may discover, but cannot recover them; they daily

see, but cannot save them; lament them they can, but help them they cannot; intreat and beg them to return they can, and do, but prevail with them they cannot. Melancthon thought, when he began to preach, to persuade all; but old Adam was too hard for him.

3. You seek all the cattle that are strayed from you, especially the best; but Jesus Christ only seeks poor lost man. There were other creatures, and such as by nature were more excellent, that lost their God and themselves; I mean the apostate angels; but he came not to seek them; herein his singular love to man appears.

4. When you have recovered and brought home your lost cattle, you may lose them the second time, and never recover them again; but so cannot Christ. Man once recovered is for ever secured by him. "All that thou hast given me I have kept, and not one of them is lost but the son of perdition;" and he was never savingly found.

5. Though you prize your cattle, yet you will not venture your life for the recovery of them; rather let them go than regain them with such an hazard; but Jesus Christ not only ventured, but actually laid down his life to recover and save lost man: He redeemed them at the price of his own blood; he is that good shepherd that laid down his life for the sheep. O the surpassing love of Christ to lost souls!

REFLECTIONS.

1. Lord, I am a lost creature! an undone soul! and herein lies my misery, that I have not only lost my God, but have no heart to return to him; nay, I fly from Christ, who is come on purpose from heaven to seek and to save me; his messengers are abroad, seeking for such as

A reflection for a lost soul.

I am, but I avoid them, or at least refuse to ol
calls and persuasions to return. Ah, what a n
state am I in! Every step I go is a step towa
my soul, with the prodigal, is ready to perish in
country; but I have no mind, with him, to retu
Wretched soul! what will the end of this be?
have lost thee, the devil hath found thee; he
all strayers from God; yea, death and hell will
find thee, if Christ do not; and then thy recove
soul! will be impossible! Why sit I here
and dying? I am not yet as irrecoverably lo
damned are. O let me delay no longer, lest I
for ever.

2. O my soul! for ever bless and admire the
Jesus Christ, who came fro
A reflection for one that was lost, but is found.
to seek and save such a lost
was. Lord, how marvello
matchless is thy love! I was
am found! I am found, and
seek; nay, I am found by him from whom I fle
love, O my Saviour! was a preventing love—a
ful love; thou lovedst me much more than
myself; I was cruel to my own soul, but t
kind; thou soughtest for me, a lost sinner, an
lost angels; thy hand of grace caught hold of
hast let go thousands, and ten thousands, as goo
self by nature: Like another David, thou didst r
poor soul out of the mouth of the destroyer; y
than so, thou didst lost thine own life to find mi
now, dear Jesus, since I am thus marvellously re
shall I ever stray again from thee? O let it
be a warning to me, how I turn aside into by-pa
any more.

CHAPTER IV.

UPON THE FEEDING OF FAT CATTLE.

Fat beasts you kill, the lean you use to save:
God's dispensations some such meaning have.

OBSERVATION.

It is a good observation of a Father, and well applied; *vituli triturantes quotidie ligantur, vituli mactandi quotidie in pascuis libere relinquuntur:* Oxen for use are daily yoked and kept short, whilst those that are designed for the shambles, are let loose in green pastures to feed at pleasure. Store beasts fare hard, and are kept lean and low; feeding beasts are excused from the yoke, whilst others are labored and wrought hard every day; the one hath more than he can eat, the other would eat more if he had it.

APPLICATION.

Thus deals the Lord oft-times with his own elect, whom he designs for glory; and with the wicked, who are preparing for the day of wrath: thus are they filled with earthly prosperity, and creature-enjoyments, like rustic and wanton beasts turned out at liberty in a fat pasture, whilst poor saints are kept hard and short; "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountains of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy." These metaphorical kine are the prosperous oppressors of the world, full-fed, and wanton wicked men. It is true, heaven hath not all the poor, nor hell all the rich; but it is a very common dispensation of providence to bestow most of the things of this world upon them that have no portion in heaven; and to keep them short on

take off the cream of earthly enjoyments, "wl
are filled with hidden treasures." "The ear
into the hands of the wicked." O what full es
an affluence of earthy delights hath God cast in
wicked men! There is much wantonness, b
in their dwellings: some that know not which
themselves in hell, once knew not where to b
goods on earth.

2. Feeding beasts grow wanton in their full
there you shall see them tumble, and frisk, a
their heels. The same effect hath the prospe
wicked; it makes them wanton; their life is t
sion from one pleasure to another. "They
their little ones like a flock, and their childr
they take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at
of the organ: they spend their days in wealt
moment go down to the grave." The same
doth the prophet Amos give of them. "Th
themselves upon beds of ivory, drink wine in b
and no sorrow goes to their hearts. These ar

them for destruction; their prosperity is food and fuel to their corruptions. Many wicked men had not been so soon ripe for hell, had they not grown in the sunshine of prosperity.

4. Fatted beasts do not in the least understand the intent and meaning of the husbandman, in allowing them such large and fat pastures, which he denies to his other cattle; and as little as beasts, do wicked men understand the scope and end of God's providences, in casting prosperity and wealth upon them; little do they think their tables are a snare, a gin, and a trap for their souls; they only, like beasts, mind what is before them, but do not at all understand the tendency and end of these their sensual delights.

5. Though the husbandman keeps his store cattle in short commons, yet he intends to preserve them; these shall remain with him, when the others are driven to the slaughter.

Such a design of preservation is carried on in all those outward straits, wants and hardships which the Lord exposes his people to. I confess such dispensations, for the present, are very stumbling and puzzling things, even to gracious and wise persons. To see wicked men not only exempted from their troubles, but even oppressed with prosperity; to see a godly man in wants and straits, and a wicked man have more than his heart can wish, is a case that puzzles the wisest Christian, till he considers the designs and issues of both those providences, and then he acquiesces in the wisdom of God so ordering it.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Doth my prosperity fat me up for hell, and prepare me for the day of slaughter? Little cause have I then to glory in it, and lift up my heart upon these things.



pleasures but so many rattles to quiet my
its damnation steals insensibly upon it? Wh
business and employments in the world, but s
sions from the business of life? There ar
ferences betwixt me and the poorest slave t
on earth; such are whipped on to hell by o
ries, and I am coached to hell in a little m
honor; these will have a less, and I a great
the day of reckoning. O that I had never
perity! I am now tumbling in a green pastur
shall be hanging up in the shambles in hel
the best fruit of my prosperity—if I were
by cruel cannibals, and fed with the richest f
al understood that the design of it were to
a beast for them to feed upon, how little st
I have to their dainties? O my soul! it we
ter for thee to have a sanctified poverty,
portion of many saints, than an ensnaring
as a trap to ruin thee for ever.

2. The wisdom of my God hath allotted
commons here: his providence feeds

n, and a fitting for the wrath to come? Well, since the ase stands thus, blessed be God for my present lot! Though I have but a little in hand, I have much in hope; ly present troubles will serve to sweeten my future joys, nd the sorrows of this life will give a lustre to the glory f the next; that which is now hard to suffer, will then e sweet to remember; my songs will then be louder han my groans now are.

CHAPTER V.

UPON THE HUSBANDMAN'S CARE FOR POSTERITY.

Good husbands labor for posterity;
To after ages saints must have an eye.

OBSERVATION.

PROVIDENT and careful husbandmen do not only labor to supply their own necessities, while living, but lay up something for their posterity when they are gone: they do not only leave to their children what their progenitors left them, but they desire to leave it improved and bettered. None but bad husbands and spendthrifts are of the mind of that heathen emperor Tiberius, who having put all into such confusion in the empire, that it might be thought the world would end with him; yet pleased himself with this apprehension, that he should be out of the reach of it; and would often say, when I am dead, et heaven and earth mingle; if the world will but hold ny time, let it break when I am gone. But provident nen look beyond their own time, and do very much concern themselves in the good or evil of their posterity.



In the first ages of the world, even till th
given, faithful men were instead of books and
they did, by oral tradition, convey the truths
posterity: but since the sacred truth hath been
to writing, no such tradition (except full conse
that written word) is to be received as authenti
truths therein delivered to the saints, are, by
clarations, open *confessions*, and constant *suffer*
preserved and delivered from age to age. Th
constant care of the whole cloud of witnesses
cient and modern, who have kept the word of
tience, and would not accept their own lives, li
estates, no, nor the whole world in exchang
invaluable treasure of truth: they have careft
sed Solomon's counsel. "Buy the truth, but s
they would not alienate that fair inheritance
inheritances on earth. For the same reason
refuse to part with, or embezzle your estates,
also refuse to part with the truths of God.

1. You will not waste or alienate your inher
cause it is precious, and of great value in v

v; and he that sells them for the greatest things in this rld, makes a soul-undoing bargain.

2. You will not waste or part with your inheritance, cause you know your posterity will be much wronged r it. They that baffle or drink away an estate, drink e tears of their sad widows, and the very blood of their poverished children. The people of God do also con-ler, how much the generation to come are concerned the conservation of the truths of God for them; It ts them to the heart, but to think that their children ould be brought up to worship dumb idols, and fall down fore a wooden and breaden God. The very birds and asts will expose their own bodies to apparent danger of ath to preserve their young. Religion doth much re intender the hearts and bowels than nature doth.

3. You reckon it a foul disgrace to sell your estates d become bankrupts; it is a word that bears ill among n, and a Christian accounts it the highest reproach in e world to be a *traitor* to, or an apostate from the ths of God. When the primitive saints were strictly uired to deliver up their bibles, those that did so were ly branded, and rushed out of their company, under e odious title of *traditores* or deliverers.

4. You are so loath to part with your estates, because u know it is hard recovering an estate again, when once u have lost it. Christians do also know, how difficult will be for the people of God in times to come, to re-er the light of the gospel again, if once it be extin-shed. There is no truth of God recovered out of Anti-ist's hands without great wrestling and much blood. e church may call every point of reformed doctrine discipline so recovered, her Naphtalies, for with great

wrestlings she hath wrestled for them, "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to them."

5. To conclude, rather than you will part with your estates, you will choose to suffer many wants and hardships all your lives; you will fare hard, and go bare, to preserve what you have for your posterity; but the people of God have put themselves upon far greater hardships than these to preserve truth; they have chosen to suffer reproaches, poverty, prisons, death, and the most cruel torments, rather than the loss of God's truth; all the martyrologies will inform you what their sufferings have been to keep the word of God's patience; they have boldly told their enemies, that they might pluck their hearts out of their bodies, but should never pluck the truth out of their hearts.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for cowardly and faint-hearted professors.

1. Base unbelieving heart! How have I flinched and shrunk from truth, when it hath been in danger? I have rather chosen to leave it than my life, liberty or estate as a prey to the enemy. I have left truth, and just it is that the God of truth should leave me. Cowardly soul! that durst not make a stand for the truth; yea, rather bold and daring soul! that would rather venture to look a wrathful God than an angry man in the face. I would not own and preserve the truth, and the God of truth will not own me. "If we deny him, he will deny us."

A reflection for such as suffer for truth.

2. Lord! unto me hast thou committed the precious treasures and trust of truth; and as I received it, do I desire to deliver it to the generations to come, that the people which are yet unborn

may praise the Lord. God forbid I should ever part with such a fair inheritance, and thereby beggar my own and thousands of souls! Thou hast given me thy truth, and the world hates me; I well know that it is the ground of the quarrel. Would I but throw truth over the walls, how soon would a retreat be sounded to all persecutors? But, Lord, thy truth is invaluably precious. What a vile thing is my blood compared with the least of all thy truths? Thou hast charged me not to sell it, and, in my strength, I resolve never to pass a fine, and cut off that golden line, whereby thy truths are entailed upon thy people from generation to generation: My friends may go, my liberty go, my blood may go; but as for thee, precious truth, thou shalt never go.

A reflection for such as are in quiet possession of truth.

3. How dear hath this inheritance of truth cost some Christians? How little hath it cost us? We are entered into their labors, we reap in peace what they sowed in tears; yea, in blood. O the grievous sufferings that they chose to endure! Rather than to deprive us of such an inheritance, those noble souls, heated with the love of Christ, and care for our souls, made many bold and brave adventures for it; and yet at what a low rate do we value that cost them so dear? Like young heirs, that never knew the getting of an estate, we spend it freely. Lord, help us thankfully and diligently to improve thy truths, while we are in quiet possession of them. Such intervals of peace and rest are usually of no long continuance with thy people.

OBSERVATION.

We generally find men are not more careful
gold, or in keeping it, than they are in examin
deeds, and preserving them; these are virtu
whole estate, and therefore it concerns them to
ful of them: if they suspect a flaw in their lease
they repair to the ablest counsel, submit it to
ment, make the worst of their cause, and query
the supposable danger with him. If he tell t
case is suspicious and hazardous, how much are
plexed and troubled? They can neither eat, d
sleep in peace, till they have a good settlem
willing they are to be at much cost and pains to

APPLICATION.

These cares and fears with which you are p
in such cases, may give you a little glimpse of th
bles of soul, with which the people of God are p
about their eternal condition; which, perhaps,
been hitherto unacquainted with, and therefore
them as fancies and whims. I say, your own

d the soul to eternity; so you cannot but imagine, that e cares, fears and solicitudes of souls about these things, e much, very much beyond yours. Let us compare e cases, and see how they answer to each other.

1. You have evidences for your estates, and by them ou hold what you have in the world: They also have vidences for their estate in Christ, and glory to come; ey hold all *in capite*, by virtue of their intermarriage ith Jesus Christ; they come to be instated in that glori- us inheritance contained in the covenant of grace. You ave their tenure in that scripture, "All is yours; for e are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Faith unites them him, and after they believe, they are sealed by the pirit of promise. Eph. 1. 13. They can lay claim to promise upon any other ground; this is their title to l that they own as theirs.

2. It often falls out, that after the sealing and executing your deeds, or leases, an adversary finds some dubious ause in them, and thereupon commences a suit of law ith you. Thus it frequently falls out with the people God, who, after their believing and sealing time, have ubts and scruples raised in them about their title. No- ing is more common, than for the devil, and their own belief, to start controversies, and raise strong objections ainst their interest in Christ, and the covenant of pro- ses. These are cunning and potent adversaries, and maintain long debates with the gracious soul, and reason cunningly and sophistically with it, that it can by no eans extricate and satisfy itself; always alleging that eir title is worth nothing, which they, poor souls, are t too apt to suspect.

3. All the while that a suit of law is depending about ur title, you have but little comfort or benefit, from

your estate; you cannot look upon it as your own, nor lay out monies in building or dressing, for fear you should lose all at last. Just so stands the case with doubting Christians; they have little comfort from the most comfortable promises, little benefit from the sweetest duties and ordinances: They put off their own comforts, and say, if we were sure that all this were ours, we would then rejoice in them: But alas! our title is dubious: Christ is a precious Christ: the promises are comfortable things; but what, if they be none of ours? Ah! how little doth the doubting Christian make of his large and rich inheritance!

4. You dare not trust your own judgments in such cases, but state your case to such as are learned in the laws, and are willing to get the ablest counsel you can to advise you. So are poor doubting Christians; they carry their cases from Christian to Christian, and from minister to minister, with such requests as these: Pray tell me, what do you think of my condition? Deal plainly and faithfully with me; these be my grounds of doubting, and these my grounds of hope. O hide nothing from me! And if they all agree that their case is good, yet they cannot be satisfied till God say so too, and confirm the word of his servants; and therefore they carry the case often before him in such words as these, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me."

5. You have little quiet in your spirits, till the case be resolved; your meat and drink do you little good; you cannot sleep in the night, because these troubled thoughts are ever returning upon you, what if I should be turned out of all at last? So it is with gracious souls; their eyes are held waking in the night, by reason of the troubles

ir hearts. Psalm lxxvii. 4. Such fears as these are quently returning upon their hearts, What if I should found a self-deceiver at last? What if I but hug a ntasm instead of Christ? How can this, or that, con- with grace? Their meat and drink do them little d; their bodies are often macerated by the troubles their souls.

5. You will not make the best of your condition, when state your case to a faithful counsellor; neither will y; but oftentimes, poor pensive souls, they make it ch worse than indeed it is; charge themselves with t which God never charged them with; though this neither their wisdom, nor their duty; but their fears niscarrying make them suspect fraud in all they do or re.

6. Lastly, when your title is cleared, your hearts are ed; yea, not only eased, but overjoyed; though not that degree, nor with the same kind of joy that the arts of Christian are overflowed, when the Lord speaks ace to their souls. O welcome the sweet morning ht after a night of darkness! now they can eat their ad with comfort, and drink their wine, yea, if it be but ter, with a merry heart. Eccles. ix. 7.

REFLECTIONS.

1. O how hath my spirit been tossed and hurried when ave met with troubles and clamors out my estate! But as for spiritual ubles, and those soul-perplexing ies that Christians speak of, I under- nd but little of them. I never called my everlasting te in question, nor broke an hour's sleep upon any such count. Ah, my supine and careless soul! little hast u regarded how matters stand in reference to eternity!

The careless soul's reflection.

look into thy condition, lest by finding thine
thou shouldst lose thy peace, or rather thy sec
what purpose will it be to shut thine eyes
light of conviction, unless thou couldst also find
to prevent thy condemnation? Thou seest o
how attentively they wait under the word, for
that may speak to their condition. Doubtless
heard how frequently and seriously they have
condition, and opened their cases to the n
Christ. But thou, O my soul! hast no such c
no doubts to be resolved; thou wilt leave all
cision of the great day, and not trouble thyse
now. Well, God will decide it, but little to th

2. I have heard how some have been perple
gious adversaries, but I be

The doubting soul's reflection.

have been so tost with fea
tracted with doubts, as I
about the state of my so

what shall I do? I have often carried my
scruples to thine ordinances, waiting for satisf
spoken there. I have carried them to those I

mfortable things; yea, which is much worse, all my
s and thine ordinances prove so too by reason of the
bles of my heart: I am no ornament to my profes-
; nay, I am a discouragement and stumbling-block to
rs. *I will hearken and hear what God the Lord will*
k. O that it might be peace! If thou do not speak
ne can; and when thou dost, keep thy servant from
ning again to folly, lest I make fresh work for an ac-
g conscience, and give new matter to the adversary
y soul.

But thou, my soul, enjoyest a double mercy from
ountiful God, who hath not only
i thee a sound title, but also the *The assured Chris-*
evidence and knowledge there- *tian's reflection.*
I am gathering and daily feeeding
the full-ripe fruits of assurance, which grow upon
op boughs of faith, whilst many of my poor brethren
: their own tears, and have their teeth broken with
el stones. Lord, thou hast set my soul upon her
places; but let me not exalt myself, because thou
exalted me, nor grow wanton, because I walk at
ty; lest for the abuse of such precious liberty, thou
my old chains upon me, and shut up my soul again
ison.

OCCASIONAL

MEDITATIONS

UPON

BIRDS, BEASTS, TREES, FLOWERS, RIVERS,

AND OTHER

OBJECTS.

MEDITATIONS ON BIRDS.

MEDITATION I.

UPON THE SINGING OF A NIGHTINGALE.

WHO that hears such various, ravishing and exquisite lody, would imagine the bird that makes it, to be of so all and contemptible a body and feather? Her charm- ; voice engaged not only mine attentive ear, but my t also, to make a nearer approach to that shady bush which that excellent musician sat veiled; and the near- I came, the sweeter the melody still seemed to be; t when I had descried the bird herself, and found her be little bigger, and no better feathered than a spar- w, it gave my thoughts the occasion of this following plication.

This bird seems to me the lively emblem of the formal pocrite; (1.) In that she is more in sound than sub- nce, a loud and excellent voice, but a little despicable

body; and it recalled to my thoughts the story of P
tarch, who, hearing a nightingale, desired to have
killed to feed upon, not questioning but she would ple
the palate as well as the ear; but when the nightin
was brought him, and he saw what a poor little crea
it was, Truly, said he, thou art *vox et preterea nih*
mere voice, and nothing else—so is the hypocrite:
a man hear him sometimes in more public duties and
courses, O, thinks he, what an excellent man is
what a choice and rare spirit is he of! But follow
home, observe him in his private conversation and re
ments, and then you will judge Plutarch's note as
cable to him as to the nightingale. (2.) This bird
served to charm most sweetly, and set her spirits
work, when she perceives she has engaged attentio
doth the hypocrite, who lives and feeds upon the ap
and commendation of his admirers, and cares little f
of those duties which bring in no returns of praise
men: he is little pleased with a silent melody an
vate pleasure betwixt God and his own soul.

Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hos sciat alter.

Alas, his knowledge is not worth a pin,
If he proclaim not what he hath within.

—He is more for the theatre than the closet; and
Christ saith, "Verily they have their reward."
Naturalists observe the nightingale to be an am
bird, that cannot endure to be outvied by any; s
rather choose to die than be excelled; a nota
stance whereof we have in the following pleasant
translated out of Starda, concerning the nightingal
lutanist.

Now the declining sun did downward bend
From higher heavens, and from his looks did send

A milder flame, when near to Tyber's flow,
A lutanist allayed his careful woe
With sounding charms; and in a greeny seat
Of shady oak, took shelter from the heat;
A nightingale o'erheard him, that did use
To sojourn in the neighbor groves, the muse
That fill'd the place, the syren of the wood,
(Poor harmless syren!) stealing near, she stood
Close lurking in the leaves, attentively
Recording that unwonted melody:
She con'd it to herself, and every strain
His fingers play'd, her throat return'd again.
The lutanist perceiv'd an answer sent
From th' imitating bird, and was content
To shew her play more fully; then in haste
He tries his lute, and giving her a taste
Of the ensuing quarrel, nimbly beats
On all his strings—as nimbly she repeats;
And wildly raging o'er a thousand keys,
Sounds a shrill warning of her after lays:
With rolling hand the lutanist then plies
The trembling cords, sometimes in scornful wise
He brushes down the strings, and strikes them all
With one even stroke—then takes them several,
And culls them o'er again; his sparkling joints
With busy descant mincing on the points,
Reach back again with nimble touch, then stays:
The bird replies, and art with art repays.
Sometimes as one unexpert, and in doubt
How she might wield her voice, she draweth out
Her tone at large, and doth at first prepare
A solemn strain, nor wear'd with winding air,

But with an equal pitch, and constant throat,
Makes clear the passage for her gliding note;
Then cross division diversly she plays,
And loudly chanting out her quickest lays,
Poises the sound, and, with a quivering voice,
Falls back again. He, wond'ring how so choice,
So various harmony could issue out
From such a little throat, doth go about
Some harder lessons, and, with wond'rous art,
Changing the strings, doth up the treble dart,
And downward smite the bass, with painful stroke
He beats; and as the trumpet doth provoke
Sluggards to fight, even so his wanton skill
With mingled discord joins the hoarse and shrill.
The bird this also tunes; and whilst she cuts
Sharp notes with melting voice, and mingled puts
Measures of middle sound, then suddenly
She thunders deep, and jugs it inwardly
With gentle murmur, clear and dull she sings
By course, as when the martial warning rings.
Believ't, the minstrel blush'd, with angry mood:
Inflam'd, quoth he, thou chantress of the wood,
Either from thee I'll bear the prize away,
Or vanquish'd, break my lute without delay.
Unimitable accents then he strains,
His hand flies on the strings; in one he chains
Far different numbers, chasing here and there,
And all the strings he labors every where!
Both flat and sharp he strikes, and stately grows
To prouder strains, and backward as he goes
Doubly divides, and, closing up his lays
Like a full choir, a shivering concert plays:
Then pausing, stood in expectation
Of his co-rival, nor durst answer on.

ut she, when practice long her throat had wet,
nduring not to yield, at once doth set
[er spirits all to work, and all in vain ;
or whilst she labors to express again,
Vith nature's simple voice, such divers keys,
Vith slender pipes, such lofty notes as these,
)'ermatch'd with high designs, o'ermatch'd with woe,
ast at the last encounter of her foe,
he faints, she dies, falls on his instrument
'hat conquer'd her, a fitting monument.
o far even little souls are driven on,
truck with a virtuous emulation.

And even as far are hypocrites driven on by their am-ition and pride, which is the spur that provokes them a their religious duties.

MEDITATION II.

PON THE SIGHT OF MANY SMALL BIRDS CHIRPING ABOUT A DEAD HAWK.

HEARING a whole choir of birds chirping and twinkling ogether, it engaged my curiosity a little to inquire into he occasion of that convocation, which mine eye quickly nformed me of, for I perceived a dead hawk in the bush, bout which they made such a noise, seeming to triumph t the death of their enemy ; and I could not blame them) sing his knell, who, like a cannibal, was wont to feed pon their living bodies, tearing them limb from limb, nd scaring them with his frightful appearance. This ird, which living was so formidable, being dead, the

poorest wren or titmouse fears not to chirp or hop over. This brings to my thoughts the base and ignoble ends of the greatest tyrants, and greedy engrossers of the world, of whom, whilst living, men were more afraid, than birds of a hawk, but dead, became objects of contempt and scorn. The death of such tyrants is both inglorious and unlamented: "When the wicked perish, there is shouting." Which was exemplified to the life at the death of Nero, of whom the poet thus sings;

Cum mors crudelem rapuisset sæva Neronem,
Credibile est multos Romam agitasse jocos.

When cruel Nero died, th' historian tells,
How Rome did mourn with bonfires, plays and bells.

Remarkable for contempt and shame have the ends of many bloody tyrants been. So Pompey the Great, of whom Claudian the poet sings.

Nudus pascit aves: jacet en qui possidet orbem,
Exiguæ telluris inops———

Birds eat his flesh. Lo, now he cannot have,
Who rul'd the world, a space to make a grave.

The like is storied of Alexander the Great, who lay unburied thirty days, and William the Conqueror, with many other such birds of prey; whilst a beneficial and holy life is usually closed up in an honorable and much lamented death.

For mine own part, I wish I may so order my conversation in the world, that I may live, when I am dead, in the affections of the best, and leave an honorable testimony in the consciences of the worst; that I may oppress none, do good to all, and say, when I die, as good Ambrose did, I am neither ashamed to live, nor afraid to die.

MEDITATION III.

UPON THE SIGHT OF A BLACKBIRD TAKING SANCTUARY IN A BUSH FROM A PURSUING HAWK.

When I saw how hardly the poor bird was put to it to save herself from her enemy, who hovered just over the bush in which she was fluttering and squeaking, I could not but hasten to relieve her, pity and succour being a debt due to the distressed, which, when I had done, the bird would not depart from the bush, though her enemy was gone. This act of kindness was abundantly repaid by this meditation, with which I returned to my walk. My soul, like this bird, was once distressed, pursued, yea, seized by Satan, who had certainly made a prey of it, had not Jesus Christ been a sanctuary to it in that hour of danger. How ready did I find him to receive my poor soul into his protection! Then did he make good that sweet promise to my experience, "Those that come unto me, I will in no wise cast out." It called to mind that pretty and pertinent story of the philosopher, who walking in the fields, a bird, pursued by a hawk, flew into his bosom; he took her out and said, "Poor bird, I will neither wrong thee, nor expose thee to thine enemy, since thou camest to me for refuge." So tender, and more than so, is the Lord Jesus to distressed souls that come unto him. Blessed Jesus! how should I love and praise thee, glorify and admire thee, for that great salvation thou hast wrought for me? If this bird had fallen into the claws of her enemy, she had been torn to pieces, indeed, and devoured, but then a few minutes had dispatched her, and ended all her pain and misery; but had



keep close to Christ, and make me say, with E
now, O Lord, since thou hast given me such a d
as this, should I again break thy commandment

MEDITATION IV.

UPON THE SIGHT OF DIVERS GOLDFINCHES INTE WITH A FLOCK OF SPARROWS.

METHINKS these birds do fitly resemble courtiers, and the plain peasants; how spruce adorned with shining and various colored fe scarlet richly laid with gold and silver lace) How plainly clad in a homespun country ruffet *Fine feathers*, saith our proverb, *make proud* yet the feathers of the sparrow are as useful cial, both for warmth and flight, though not so namental, as the others: and if both were s their feathers, the sparrow would prove the of the two; by which I see that the greatest

Little would a man think such rich treasures of grace, wisdom, humility, &c. lay under some russet coats.

Sæpa sub attrita latitat sapientia veste.

Under poor garments more true worth may be
Than under silks that whistle—who but he.

Whilst, on the side, *the heart of the wicked*, as Solomon hath observed, *is little worth*, how much soever his clothes be worth. Alas! it falls out too frequently among us, as it doth with men in the Indies, who walk over the rich veins of gold and silver ore, which lie hid under a ragged and barren surface and know it not. For my own part, I desire not to value any man by what is extrinsical and wordly, but by that true internal excellency of grace, which makes the face to shine in the eyes of God and good men: I would contemn a vile person, though never so glorious in the eye of the world, but honor such as fear the Lord, how sordid and despicable soever to appearance.

MEDITATION V.

UPON THE SIGHT OF A ROBIN RED BREAST PICKING UP A WORM FROM A MOLE HILL THEN RISING.

Observing the mole working industriously beneath, and the bird watching so intently above, I made a stand to observe the issue, when, in a little time, the bird descends, and seizes upon a worm, which I perceived was crawling apace from the enemy below that hunted her, but fell to the share of another, which, from above, watched for her. My thoughts presently suggested these *medit-*

ations from that occasion.—Methought this poor worm seemed to be the emblem of my poor soul, which is more endangered by its own lusts of pride and covetousness, than this worm was by the mole and bird. My pride, like the aspiring bird, watches for it above; my covetousness, like this subterranean mole, digging for it beneath. Poor soul! what a sad *dilemma* art thou brought to? If thou go down into the *caverns* of this earth, there thou art a prey to thy covetousness that hunts thee; and if thou aspire, or but creep upwards, there pride waits to ensnare thee. Distressed soul! whither wilt thou go? Ascend thou mayest, not by vain elation, but by a heavenly conversation, beside which there is no way for thy preservation. "The way of life is above to the wise," &c.

Again, I could not but observe the accidental benefit this poor harmless bird obtained by the labor of the mole, who, hunting intentionally for herself, unburroughed and ferreted out this worm for the bird, who possibly was hungry enough, and could not have been relieved for this time, but by the mole, the fruit of whose labor she now feeds upon. Even thus the Lord oft times makes good his word to his people. "The wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just."—And again, "The earth shall help the woman." This was fully exemplified in David, to whom Nabal, that churlish muck-worm, speaks all in possessives. "Shall I take my bread, &c. and give it to one I know not whom?" And yet David reaps the fruit of all the pains and toils of Nabal at last. Let it never encourage me to idleness, that God sometimes gives his people the fruit of other's sweat; but if providence reduce me to necessity, and disable me from helping myself, I doubt not then, but it will provide instruments to do it.—The bird was hungry, and could not dig.

MEDITATION VI.

ON THE SHOOTING OF TWO FINCHES FIGHTING IN THE AIR.

How soon hath death ended the quarrel betwixt these ro little combatants! Had they agreed better, they ght have lived longer. It was their own contention t gave both the opportunity and provocation of their ath: and though living they could not, yet, being dead, y can lie quietly together in my hand.

Foolish birds, was it not enough that birds of prey ched to devour them, but they must peck and scratch another? Thus have I seen the birds of paradise ans I mean) tearing and wounding each other, like so y birds of prey, and by their unchristian contests giv- the occasion of their common ruin; yea, and that only when at liberty, as these were, but when enga- also; and yet, as one well observes, if ever Chris- will agree, it will either be in a prison or in hea- ; for in a prison their quarrelsome lusts lie low, and heaven they shall be utterly done away.

But O what pity is it, that those who shall agree so fectly in heaven, should bite and devour each other on earth! That it should be said of them, as one geniously observed, who saw their carcasses lie togeth- as if they had lovingly embraced each other, who ll together by a duel, *Quanta amicitia se invicem amplec- tur, qui mutua et implacabiti inimicitia perierunt!*

Embracing one another, now they lie,
Who by each other's bloody hands did die.

Or, as he said, who observed how quietly and peacea- y the dust and bones, even of enemies, did lie together the grave, *Non tanta vivi pace conjuncti estis*—you did

not live together so peacably. If conscience of C
command will not, yet the consideration of commo
should powerfully persuade to unity and amity.

MEDITATION VII.

UPON THE SINGING OF A BLIND FINCH BY NIGH

A dear friend, who was a great observer of the
of God in nature, told me, that being entertained
sight of many rarities at a friend's house in L
among other things his friends shewed him a finch,
eyes being put out, would frequently sing, even
night. This bird, in my opinion, is the lively e
of such careless and unconcerned persons, as the p
describes, who chant to the viol, when a dismal n
trouble and affliction hath overshadowed the c
You would have thought it strange to have hea
bird sing in the night, when all others are in a deep s
except the owl, an unclean bird, and the nightin
which before we made the emblem of the hyp
And as strange it is, that any, except the profane a
pocritical, should so unseasonably express their
and jollity; that any of Zion's children should
pleasure, whilst she herself lies in tears. The peo
God in Psal. cxxxvii. tell us, in what posture of s
they sat, even like birds, with their heads under
wings, during the night of their captivity. "How
we sing the Lord's songs in a strange land?" It
enough, such as can sing and chant in the night
church's trouble, have well feathered their nests

s of their prosperity; however, let them know, that
d will turn their unseasonable mirth into a sadder note;
l those that now sit sad and silent, shall shortly sing for
of heart, when "the winter is past, the rain is over
l gone, the flowers appear again upon the earth, and
: time of the singing of birds is come."

MEDITATION VIII.

UPON THE COMPARING OF TWO BIRDS NESTS.

It is pretty to observe the structure and commodious-
s of the habitation of these little architects who, tho'
y act not by reason and counsel, but only by natural
inct, yet reason itself could hardly have contrived a
ter building of such simple materials. How neatly
th the thrush ceiled or plastered his nest with admira-
art and industry? How warmly hath the finch matted
? and both well fenced against the injury of the
ather.

How comfortably hath nature provided convenient hab-
ions for the weak and tender young ones, who have
rm lodging, and variety of provisions hourly brought
m, without their care or pains? This trifling object
gests to my thoughts a more excellent and serious con-
plation, even the wonderful and unparalleled abase-
nt of Jesus Christ, who for my sake voluntarily sub-
tted himself to a more destitute and neglected state
n these birds of the air; for he saith "The foxes have
les, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of
n hath not where to lay his head."

"The craggy rock to foxes holes afford,
"The pleasant woods a resting place to birds;
"For Christ no fixed habitation's found,
"But what was borrowed or the naked ground."

O melting consideration! that the glorious Son of God, "The Lord of glory," "The brightness of his Father's glory," "Who was rich," "and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," who, from "all eternity," was infinitely and ineffably "delighting and rejoicing in the bosom of his Father," that he, I say should manifest himself in "flesh," yea, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," that is, in flesh that hath the marks and effects of sin upon it, as hunger, thirst, pain, weariness and mortality; and not only so, but to choose such a state of outward meanness and poverty, never being possessed of a house in the world, but living as a stranger in other men's houses, and stooping, in this respect, to a lower condition than the very birds of the air, and all this for enemies. O let it work both admiration and thankfulness in my soul! my body is better accommodated than the body of my Lord. "Dear Jesus! by how much the viler thou madest thyself for me, by so much the dearer shalt thou be to me."

MEDITATION IX.

UPON THE EARLY SINGING OF BIRDS.

How am I reproved of sluggishness of these watchful birds, which cheerfully entertain the very dawning of the morning with their cheerful and delightful warblings! They set their little spirits all a work betimes, whilst my nobler spirits are bound with the bonds of soft and down

lumbers. For shame, my soul! suffer not that publican leep to seize so much of thy time, yea, thy best and freshest time; reprove and chide thy sluggish body, as a good bishop once did, when, upon the same occasion, he said, *Surrexerunt passeres, et sternunt pontifices.*

The early chirping sparrows may reprove
Such lazy bishops as their beds do love.

Of many sluggards it may be said, as Tully said of Verres, the deputy of Sicily, *Quod nunquam solem nec orientem, nec occidentem videret;* that he never saw the sun rising in bed after, nor setting, being in bed before.

It is pity that Christians, of all men, should suffer sleep to cut such large thongs out of so narrow a hide, as their time on earth is. But alas! it is not so much early rising, as a wise improving those fresh and free hours with God, that will enrich the soul; else, as our proverb saith, *A man may be early up, and never the near;* yea, far better is it to be found in bed sleeping, than to be up doing nothing, or that which is worse than nothing. O my soul! learn to prepossess thyself every morning with the thoughts of God, and suffer not those fresh and sweet operations of thy mind to be prostituted to earthly things; for that is experimentally true, which * one, in this case, hath pertinently observed, that if the world get the start of religion in the morning, it will be hard for religion to overtake it all day after.

* Mr. Case, in Epist. to the Morn. Lect.

were busily feeding, and suspected no danger
whilst their companions were drawn away fro
after another, all the interruption it gave th
only for a minute or two, whilst they stood p
that hole through which their companions w
and then fell to their meat again as busily as
could not choose but say—"Even thus supri
death steal upon the children of men, whil
wholly intent upon the cares and pleasures
not at all suspecting its so near approach."
saw not the hand that ensnared them, nor do t
hand of death plucking them one after anothe
grave.

"Death steps as swift, and yet no noise it mak
"Its hand unseen, but yet most surely takes."

And even as the surviving birds for a little ti
to stand affrighted, peeping after their comp
then as busy as ever to their meat again: jus
with the careless, inconsiderate world, who
daily dropping into eternity round about them,
present are a little startled, and will look into
after their neighbors, and then fall as busily to

it, and conquer it before it kill me; let it not come as enemy upon my back, but rather let me meet it as a friend, half way. Die I must, but let me lay up that good treasure before I go, Matt. vi. 19. carry with me a good conscience when I go, 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7. and leave behind a good example when I am gone, and then let death come, and welcome.

MEDITATIONS UPON BEASTS.

MEDITATION I.

UPON THE CLOGGING OF A STRAYING BEAST.

When this bullock contented himself, and remained quiet within his own bounds, his owner had never put such a heavy clog upon his neck; but I see the prudent husbandman chooses rather to keep him with this clog, than lose him for want of one. What this clog is to him, that affliction and trouble to me; had my soul kept close with God in liberty and prosperity, he would never thus have clogged me with adversity; yea, and happy were it for me, if I might stray from God no more, who hath thus clogged me with preventive afflictions; if, with David, I might say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have kept thy word." O my soul! it is better for thee to have thy pride clogged with poverty, thy ambition with reproach, thy carnal expectancies with constant disappointments, than to be at liberty to run from God and duty.

It is true, I am sometimes as weary of these troubles as this poor beast is of the clog he draws after him, and often wish myself rid of them; but yet, if God should take them off, for ought I know, I might have cause to wish them on again, to prevent a greater mischief. It is storied of Basil, that for many years he was sorely afflicted with an inveterate headach, (that was his clog;) he often prayed for the removal of it; at last God removed it, but instead thereof he was sorely exercised with the motions and temptations of lust, which, when he perceived, he as earnestly desired his headach again, to prevent a greater evil. Lord! if my corruptions may be prevented by my afflictions, I refuse not to be clogged with them; but my soul rather desires thou wouldst hasten the time when I shall be for ever freed from them both.

MEDITATION II.

UPON THE LOVE OF A DOG TO HIS MASTER.

How many a weary step, through mire and dirt, hath this poor dog followed my horse's heels to-day, and all this for a very poor reward? for all he gets by it at night is but bones and blows; yet will he not leave my company, but is content upon such hard terms to travel with me from day to day.

O my soul! what conviction and shame may this leave upon thee, who art oftentimes even weary of following thy master, Christ, whose rewards and encouragements of obedience are so incomparably sweet and sure! I cannot beat back this dog from following me, but every incon-

siderable trouble is enough to discourage me in the way of my duty. Ready I am to resolve as that scribe did, Matt. viii. 19. "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" but how doth my heart faulter, when I must encounter with the difficulties of the way? Oh! let me make a whole heart choice of Christ for my portion and happiness! and then I shall never leave him, nor turn back from following him, though the present difficulties were much more, and the present encouragements much less.

MEDITATION III.

UPON THE FIGHTING OF TWO RAMS.

TAKING notice how furiously these sheep, which, by nature, are mild and gentle, did yet, like bulls, push each other, taking their advantage by going back to meet with a greater rage and fury: Methought I saw in this a plain emblem of the unchristian contests and animosities which fall out amongst those who call themselves the people of God, who are in scripture also styled sheep, for their meekness and innocency; and yet, through the remaining corruptions that are in them, thus do they push each other; as one long since complained, *non secus ac*,

Cum duo conversis inimica in prœlia tauri
Frontibus incurrunt ——— ———

Shall Christians one another wound and push,
Like furious bulls, when they together rush?

The fighting of these sheep doth, in two respects, notably comport with the sinful practices of contending Chris-

tians. 1. That in this fight they engage with their heads one against another; and what are they but those head notions, or *opposition of sciences*, falsely so called, that have made so many broils and uproars in the Christian world? O what clashings have these heady opinions caused in the churches! First heads, and then hearts have clashed. Christians have not distinguished betwixt *adversarius litis, et personæ;* an adversary to the *opinion*, and to the *person;* but dipt their tongues and pens in vinegar and gall, shamefully aspersing and reproaching one another, because their understandings are not cast in one mould, and their heads all of a bigness. But, 2. That which countrymen observe from the fighting of sheep, *That it presages foul and stormy weather*, is much more certainly consequent upon the fighting of Christ's sheep. Do these clash and push? Surely *it is an infallible prognostic of an ensuing storm.* Mal. iv. 6.

MEDITATION IV.

UPON THE CATCHING OF AN HORSE IN A FAT PASTURE.

When this horse was kept in poor short leas, where he had much scope, but little grass, how gentle and tractable was he then? He would not only stand quiet to be taken, but come to hand of his own accord, and follow me up and down the field for a crust of bread, or handful of oats; but since I turned him into this fat pasture, he comes no more to me, nor will suffer me to come near him, but throws up his heels wantonly against me, and flies from me, as if I were rather his *enemy* than *benefac-*

for. In this I behold the carriage of my own heart towards God, who the more he hath done for me, the more seldom doth he hear from me; in a low and afflicted state, how tractable is my heart to duty? Then it comes to the foot of God voluntarily. But in an exalted condition, how wildly doth my heart run from God and duty? With this ungrateful requital God faulted his own people, Jer. ii. 31. teachable and tractable in the *wilderness*, but when fatted in that rich pasture of Canaan, *Then we are lords, we will come no more to thee.* How soon are all God's former benefits forgotten? And how often is that ancient observation verified, even in his own people?

"No sooner do we gifts on some bestow,
"But presently our gifts grey-headed grow."

But he is a bad tenant, that will maintain a suit at law against his landlord with his own rent; and a bad heart, that will fight against God with his own mercies. I wish it may be with my heart, as it is reported to be with the waters in the kingdom of Congo, that are never so sweet to the taste, as when the tide is at the highest.

MEDITATION V.

UPON THE HUNTING OF A DEER.

The full-mouthed cry of these dogs, which, from the morning have hunted this poor tired deer, which is now no longer able to stand before them, but is compassed round with them, who thirst for, and will presently suck her blood, brings to my thoughts the condition and state of Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, who was thus

hunted from place to place by blood-thirsty enemies. Upon this very account, the 22d Psalm, which treats of his death, is inscribed with the title of *Aijeleth Shahar*, which signifies the *hind of the morning*, and fully imports the same notion which this occasion presented me with; for look, as the *hind* or *deer*, which is intended to be run down that day, is roused by the dogs early in the morning, so was Christ, in the very morning of his infancy, by bloody Herod, and that cruel pack confederated with him. Thus was he chased from place to place, till that was fulfilled which was prophetically written of him in verse 16, of the fore-cited Psalm. "For dogs have compassed me about, the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet."

And canst thou expect, O my soul! to fare better than he did, or escape the rage of bloody men? Surely, if the Spirit of Christ dwell in thee, if his holiness have favored thee, these dogs will wind it, and give thee chase too; they go upon the scent of holiness still, and would hunt to destruction every one, in whom there is *aliquid Christi*, any thing of Christ, if the gracious providence of the Lord did not sometimes rate them off; for it is no less a pleasure which some wicked ones take in hunting the people of God, than what Claudian the poet observes men use to take in hunting wild beasts.

"Whilst weary huntsmen in the night do sleep,
"Their fancies in the woods still hunting keep."

Lord! should I with the hypocrite decline the profession and practice of holiness, to escape the rage of persecuting enemies, at what time they cease, my own conscience would begin to hunt me like a blood-hound: let me rather choose to be chased by men than God, to flee before pursuing enemies, than be dogged from day to day with a guilty conscience.

MEDITATIONS UPON TREES.

MEDITATION I.

UPON THE FALL OF BLOSSOMS, NIPT BY A FROSTY MORNING.

Beholding, in an early spring, fruit trees embossed
th beautiful blossoms of various colors, which breathed
th their delicious odours into the circumambient air,
d adorned the branches, on which they grew, like so
ny rich jewels, or glittering pendents; and further ob-
rving how these perfumed blossoms dropt off, being bit-
n with the frost, and discolored all the ground, as if a
wer of snow had fallen; I said within myself, these
eet and early blossoms are not unlike my sweet and
rly affections to the Lord, in the days of my first ac-
intance with him. O what fervent love, panting de-
es and heavenly delights beautified my soul in those
ys! The odoriferous scent of the sweetest blossoms,
morning breath of the most fragrant flowers, hath not
f that sweetness with which those my first affections
re enriched. O! happy time! thrice pleasant spring!
y soul hath it still in remembrance, and is humbled
thin me; for these also were but blossoms, which now
nipt and faded; that first flourish is gone; my heart
ike the winter's earth, because thy face, Lord, is to me
e a winter sun. *Awake, O north wind! and come,*
th wind, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof
y flow out; then let my beloved come into his garden, and
his pleasant fruit.

MEDITATION II.

UPON THE KNITTING OR SETTING OF FRUIT.

I HAVE often observed, that when the blossoms of a t
set and knit, though the flourish thereof be gone, and
thing but the bare rudiment of the expected fruit be le
yet then the fruit is much better secure from the dang
of frosts and winds, than whilst it remained in the flow
or blossom; for now it hath past one of those *critical p*
riods, in which so many trees miscarry and lose the
fruit. And methought this *natural observation* fairly l
me to this *theological proposition*, "That good mo
and holy purposes in the soul, are never secured,
past their most dangerous *crisis*, till they be turned i
fixed resolutions, and answerable executions, which
the knitting and setting of them."

Upon this proposition my melting thoughts thus di
ed: Happy had it been for thee, my soul, had all
blessed motions of the Spirit been thus knit and fixed
thee. Oh! how have mine affections blown and bud
under the warm beams of the gospel! But a chill bl
from the cares, troubles and delights of the world w
out, and the vanity and deadness of the heart within, h
blasted all; my goodness hath been but as a morning d
or early cloud, that vanisheth away. And even of di
ordinances, I may say what is said of human ordinan
"They have perished in the using." A blossom is
fructus imperfectus, et ordinabilis, an imperfect thing
itself, and something in order to fruit; a good motion
holy purpose is but *opus imperfectum, et ordinabile*,
imperfect work, in order to a complete work of the S

when that *primus impetus*, those first motions were ag upon my heart, had I then pursued them in the e and vigour of them, how many difficulties might I e overcome? Revive thy work, O Lord, and give to my soul a miscarrying womb, or dry breasts.

MEDITATION III.

UPON THE SIGHT OF A FAR SPREADING OAK.

WHAT a lofty flourishing tree is here? It seems rather e a little wood, than a single tree, every limb thereof ng the dimensions and branches of a tree in it; and as great as it is, it was once but a little slip, which might pull up with two fingers; this vast body was ained virtually and potentially in a small acorn. Well , I will never despise the day of small things, nor de- of arriving at an eminency of grace, though at pre- it be but as a bruised reed, and the things that are in e ready to die. As things in nature, so the things of Spirit grow up to their fulness and perfection by slow insensible degrees. The famous and heroical acts of nost renowned believers were such as themselves l not once perform, or, it may be, think they ever ld. Great things, both in nature and grace, come small and contemptible beginnings.

MEDITATION IV.

UPON THE SIGHT OF MANY STICKS LODGED IN THE BRANCHES OF A CHOICE FRUIT-TREE.

How is this tree battered with stones, and loaded with sticks, that have been thrown at it, whilst those that grow about it, being barren, or bearing harsher fruit, escape untouched! Surely if its fruit had not been so good, its usage had not been so bad. And yet it is affirmed that some trees, as the walnut, &c. bear the better for being thus bruised and battered.

Even thus it fares in both respects with the best of men; the more holy, the more envied and persecuted: every one that passes by will have a fling at them. Me thinks I see how devils and wicked men walk round about the people of God, whom he hath enclosed in his arms of power, like so many boys about an orchard, whose lips water to have a fling at them. But God turns all the stones of reproach into precious stones to his people; they bear the better for being thus battered. And in them is that ancient observation verified:

> "The palms and crowns of virtue thus increase;
> "Thus persecution's turned into peace."

Let me be but fruitful to God in holiness, and ever abounding in the work of the Lord, and then, whilst devils and men are flinging at me, either by hand or tongue persecutions, I will sing amidst them all with the divine poet:

> "What open force, or hidden charm
> "Can blast my fruits, or bring me harm,
> "Whilst the inclosure is thine arm?"

HEBR. POEM. p. 125.

MEDITATION V.

UPON THE GATHERING OF CHOICE FRUIT FROM A SCRUBBED, UNPROMISING TREE.

Would any man think to find such rare, delicious fruit upon such an unworthy tree to appearance as this is? I should rather have expected the most delicious fruit from the most handsome and flourishing trees; but I see, I must neither judge the worth of trees or men by their external form and appearance. This is not the first time I have been deceived in judging by that rule; under fair and promising outsides, I have found nothing of worth; and in many deformed despicable bodies, I have found precious and richly furnished souls. The sap and juice of this scrubbed tree is concocted into rare and excellent fruits, whilst the juice and sap of some other fair, but barren trees, serve only to keep them from rotting, which is all the use that many souls, which dwell in beautiful bodies, serve for; they have, as one saith, *animam pro sale*; their souls are but salt to their bodies: Or thus,

The only use to which their souls do serve,
Is but like salt, their bodies to preserve.

If God have given me a sound soul in a sound body, I have a double *mercy* to bless him for; but whether my body be vigorous and beautiful, or not, yet let my soul be so: for as the esteem of this tree, so the esteem and true honor of every man rises rather from his fruitfulness and usefulness, than from his shape and form.

It was replied to this purpose—"That he rathe
ed the fruit than the form ;" and that this slight i
ience was abundantly preponderated by a more
rable advantage. This tree, said he, which y
root up, hath yielded me more fruit than many
trees which have nothing else to commend them
regular situation. I could not but yield to the
this answer, and could wish it had been spoke
that all our uniformity-men had heard it, wh
stick to root up many hundreds of the best beare
Lord's orchard, because they stand not in an ex
with other more conformable, but less benefic
who *perdunt substantiam propter accidentia*, de
fruit to preserve the form.

Not much unlike such foolish men, are those
That strive for shadows, and the substance lose

MEDITATIONS ON A GARI

at than ever; resolves to new-model the whole pl t, and reduce it to a better form; is now become so curious and neat, that not a weed or stone is suffered in it, but all must lie in exquisite order; and whatever ornament she had observed in her neighbor's, she is now restless till she sees it in her own.

Happy were it, thought I, if, in an holy emulation, every one would thus endeavor to rectify the disorders of their own conversation, by the excellent graces they behold in the more heavenly and regular lives of others. Some Christians there are, I wish their number were greater, whose actions lie in such a comely and beautiful order, that few of their neighbors can look upon their examples without self-conviction and shame; but few are so happy to be provoked into self-reformation by such rare patterns. I see it is much easier to pull up many weeds out of a garden, than one corruption out of the heart; and to procure an hundred flowers to adorn a knot, than one grace to beautify the soul. It is more natural to corrupt man to envy, than to imitate the spiritual excellencies of others.

MEDITATION II.

UPON A HEEDLESS TREAD IN A CURIOUS GARDEN.

Passing through the small divisions of a curious knot, which was richly adorned with rare tulips and other beautiful flowers; I was very careful to shun those flowers, which indeed had no other worth to commend them but their exquisite color, and unadvisedly trode upon and spoiled an excellent choice herb, which, though it grew obscurely, yet had rare physical virtues in it.

When I was made sensible of the involuntary trespass I had committed, I thought I could scarcely make the owner a better compensation, than by telling him that herein, though against my will, I did but tread in the footsteps of the greatest part of the world, who are very careful, as I was, to keep their due distance from splendid, though worthless gallants, meanwhile trampling upon and crushing under foot the obscure, but most precious servants of God in the world. As little do they heed these most excellent persons, as I did this precious herb.

Summa ingenia in occulto sæpe latent, saith Plautus.

Rare wits and herbs sometimes do sculk and shrink
In such blind holes, as one would little think.

For mine own part, I desire to tread upon no man with the foot of contempt and pride, much less upon any good man; and that I may not, it concerns me to look before I step; I mean to consider before I censure: Had I done so by this rare herb, I had never hurt it.

MEDITATION III.

UPON THE WITHERED POSY TAKEN UP IN THE WAY.

Finding, in my walk, a posy of once sweet and fragrant, but now dry and withered flowers, which I suppose to be thrown away by one that had formerly worn it; thus, said I, doth the unfaithful world use its friends when Providence hath blasted and withered them; whilst they are rich and honorable they will put them into their bosoms, as the owner of this posy did, whilst it was fresh and fragrant, and as easily throw them away as useless

and worthless things, when thus they come to be withered. Such usage as this Petronius long since complained of.

"Are they in honor? Then we smile like friends;
"And with their fortunes all our friendship ends."

But this loose and deceitful friend stinks so odiously in the very nostrils of nature, that a *heathen poet* severely taxes and condemns it as most unworthy of a man.

"'Tis base to change with fortune, and deny
"A faithful friend because in poverty."

And is this indeed the friendship of the world? Doth it thus use them whom once it honored? Then, Lord! let me never seek its friendship. O let me esteem the smiles and honors of men less, and thy love and favor more! Thy love is indeed unchangeable, being pure, free, and built upon nothing that is mutable: thou never servest thy friends as the world doth its darlings.

MEDITATION IV.

UPON THE SUDDEN WITHERING OF A ROSE.

Being with my friend in a garden, we gathered each of us a rose: he handled his tenderly, smelled it but seldom and sparingly; I always kept mine to my nose, or squeezed it in my hand, whereby in a very short time it lost both color and sweetness, but his still remained as sweet and fragrant as if it had been growing upon its own root. These roses, said I, are the true emblems of the best and sweetest creature-enjoyments in the world, which being moderately and cautiously used and enjoyed, may, for a long time, yield sweetness to the possessor of

them; but if once the affections seize too greedily upon them, and squeeze them too hard, they quickly wither in our hands, and we lose the comfort of them, and that either through the soul's surfeiting upon them, or the Lord's righteous and just removal of them, because of the excess of our affection to them; earthly comforts, like pictures, shew best at a due distance. It was therefore a good saying of Homer,

"I like him not, who at the rate
"Of all his might doth love or hate."

It is a point of excellent wisdom to keep the golden bridle of moderation upon all the affections we exercise upon earthly things, and never to slip those reins, unless when they move towards God, in whose love there is no danger or excess.

MEDITATION V.

UPON THE SUDDEN WITHERING OF BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS.

How fresh and orient did these flowers lately appear, when being dashed over with the morning dew, they stood in all their pride and glory, breathing out their delicious odours, which perfumed the air round about them, but now are withered and shrivelled up, and have neither any desirable beauty or favor in them.

So vain a thing is the admired beauty of creatures, which so captivates the hearts, and exercises a pleasing tyranny over the affections of vain man, yet it is as suddenly blasted as the beauty of a flower.

"How frail is beauty! In how short a time
"It fades, like roses, which have past their prime.

"So wrinkled age the fairest face will plough,
"And cast deep furrows on the smoothest brow.
"Then where's that lovely tempting face? Alas!
"Yourselves would blush to view it in a glass."

If then thou delightest in beauty, O my soul! choose that which is lasting. There is a beauty which never fades, even the beauty of holiness upon the inner man; this abides fresh and orient for ever, and sparkles gloriously, when thy face, the seat of natural beauty, is become an abhorrent and loathsome spectacle. Holiness enamels and sprinkles over the face of the soul with a beauty, upon which Christ himself is enamoured; even imperfect holiness on earth is a rose that breathes sweetly in the bud: in heaven it will be full blown, and abide in its prime to all eternity.

MEDITATION VI.

UPON THE TENDERNESS OF SOME CHOICE FLOWERS.

How much care is necessary to preserve the life of some flowers! they must be boxed up in the winter, others must be covered with glasses in their springing up, the finest and richest mould must be sifted about the roots, and assiduously watered, and all this little enough, and sometimes too little to preserve them, whilst other common and worthless flowers grow without any help of ours: Yea, we have no less to do to rid our gardens of them, than we have to make the former grow there.

Thus stands the case with our hearts, in reference to the motions of grace or sin. Holy thoughts of God must be assiduously watered by prayer, earthed up by medita-

tion, and defended by watchfulness; and yet all this is sometimes too little to preserve them alive in our souls. Alas! the heart is a soil that agrees not with them, they are tender things, and a small matter will nip and kill them. To this purpose is the complaint of the divine poet,

Who would have thought a joy
so coy
To be offended so,
and go
So suddenly away?
Hereafter I had need
take heed.
Joys among other things
have wings,
And watch their opportunities of flight,
Converting in a moment day to night.

HERBERT.

But vain thoughts, and unholy suggestions, these spread themselves, and root deep in the earth; they naturally agree with the soil; so that it is almost impossible at any time to be rid of them. It is hard to forget what is our sin to remember.

MEDITATION VII.

UPON THE STRANGE MEANS OF PRESERVING THE LIFE OF VEGETABLES.

I observe that plants and herbs are sometimes killed by frosts, and yet without frosts they would neither live nor thrive: They are sometimes drowned with water, and yet without water they cannot subsist: They are

refreshed and cheered by the heat of the sun, and yet that sometimes kills and scorches them up. Thus lives my soul; troubles and afflictions seem to kill all its comforts, and yet without these its comforts could not live. The sun-blasts of prosperity sometimes refresh me, and yet those sun-blasts are the likeliest way to wither me: By what seeming contradictions is the life of my spirit preserved! What a mystery! what a paradox is the life of a Christian!

Welcome, my health, this sickness makes me well,
Med'cines adieu.
When with diseases I have list to dwell,
I'll wish for you.
Welcome, my strength, this weakness makes me able,
Powers adieu.
When I am weary grown of standing stable,
I'll wish for you.
Welcome, my wealth, this loss hath gain'd me more,
Riches adieu.
When I again grow greedy to be poor,
I'll wish for you.
Welcome, my credit, this disgrace is glory,
Honors adieu.
When for renown and fame I shall be sorry,
I'll wish for you.
Welcome content, this sorrow is my joy,
Pleasures adieu.
When I desire such griefs as may annoy,
I'll wish for you.
Health, strength and riches, credit and content,
Are spared best sometimes when they are spent.
Sickness and weakness, loss, disgrace and sorrow,
Lend most sometimes, when most they seem to borrow.

And if by these contrary and improbable ways the Lord preserves our souls in life, no marvel then we find such strange and seemingly contradictory motions of our hearts, under the various dealings of God with us, and are still restless in whatsoever condition he puts us; which restless frame was excellently expressed in that pious epigram of the reverend Gataker, made a little before his death.

I thirst for thirstiness, I weep for tears,
Well pleas'd I am to be displeased thus,
The only thing I fear, is want of fears,
Suspecting I am not suspicious.
I cannot choose but live, because I die;
And when I am not dead, how glad am I!
Yet when I am thus glad for sense of pain,
And careful am, lest I should careless be;
Then I do grieve for being glad again,
And fear lest carefulness take care for me.
Amidst these restless thoughts this rest I find,
For those that rest not here, there's rest behind.

Jam tetigi portum, valete.

THE

TOUCHSTONE

OF

SINCERITY.

BY REV. JOHN FLAVEL.

THE TOUCHSTONE OF SINCERITY.

REV. III. 17, 18.

BECAUSE THOU SAYEST, I AM RICH, AND INCREASED WITH GOODS, AND HAVE NEED OF NOTHING; AND KNOWEST NOT THAT THOU ART WRETCHED, AND MISERABLE, AND POOR, AND BLIND, AND NAKED: I COUNSEL THEE TO BUY OF ME GOLD TRIED IN THE FIRE, THAT THOU MAYEST BE RICH; &c.

CHAPTER I.

Elucidation of the text.

THE church of Laodicea, to which these words were addressed, had degenerated much more than the other other churches of Asia. The members of the Laodicean church had a name to live, but were dead. In regard to the spiritual state, they were emphatically denominated *lukewarm*. They had drawn around them the form of religion, but never heartily engaged in the practice of its duties; they were strangers to its transforming efficacy, its living influence, and heavenly consolations. To this lifeless indifference, the Lord Jesus expressed his aversion; "I would that thou wert cold or hot," &c. The word *cold*, here denotes the moral state of those who are wholly alienated from religion; the term *hot*, relates to the pious temper of those who fervently love Christ and his institutions; the *lukewarm*, are such as have in reality too little religion to be called spiritual,

and yet, externally, too much the appearance of it, to be esteemed carnal. The form of religion they affect as an honor, or a safeguard; the power of it they imagine would be burthensome: they choose not to appear, openly, on the side of error and impiety, but are more unwilling to live conformably to their profession; their policy is such that they venture little, andsuch is their folly, that they lose all.

In the text, the Laodiceans are accused of being in this deplorable state, and a remedy for their spiritual maladies is pointed out.

First, Their moral disease is exposed, in its symptoms, its cause, and its aggravations.

1. Its symptoms are, formality, indecision, listless stupidity, lukewarmness;—whatever enters into the character of those professors of religion, who supremely love their temporal interests and private happiness.

2. Its cause is thus noted; "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." All these epithets relate to the unsoundness of their foundation. The two first, "*wretched* and *miserable*," are general, describing their condition to be lamentable, if not hopeless; the three last, "poor, blind, naked," are more particular referring to those great defects, in the foundation upon which they were building, which rendered their state so pitiable and dangerous. Thou art "*poor*,"—devoid of righteousness and true holiness before God. These are the true riches, the riches of Christians; and he that does not possess them, is poor and miserable, how large soever be his mental gifts, or earthly treasure. Thou art "blind;"—without Divine illumination, void of spiritual light; and so neither knowing the disease, nor the remedy: the evil of sin or the necessity of Christ

Thou art "naked;"—in a shameful, defenceless, and exposed condition; without the garments of salvation, the robe of righteousness, and shield of faith.

5. The aggravations of this deadly Laodicean disease, are thus stated; "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; but knowest not," &c. Alas, to what absurdity and impiety does spiritual delusion lead? To be destitute of holiness, without Christ, and without hope, were sufficiently distressing; while in this state, to boast of spiritual riches, is most miserable. To have the very symptoms of death upon us, and yet confidently protest that we are healthy and safe, is lamentable indeed!

Secondly, A remedy is prescribed: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see."

1. Let us consider what is here recommended. These metaphors represent the most superb and valuable things. *Gold tried in the fire;*—true holiness, Christian graces that have been tried and proved. *White raiment;*—the righteousness of the saints. *Eye salve;*—the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

2. Whence may these blessings be obtained? Buy of *me*, saith Christ. Ordinances, ministers, angels cannot communicate them to you. Christ, the repository of all graces, alone can confer them.

3. How are they to be acquired? Not by purchase, as those pretend, who build the notion of merit on the words *buy of me*. The exigency of the case destroys this conceit; for what can they who are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and in want of all things, offer, in return, for these divine riches? Doubtless *to buy*, as the

phrase is used here, is, cordially to receive, in the way of his own appointment, what Christ offers to bestow. Thus it is elsewhere written; "He that hath no money, let him come, and buy wine and milk, without money, and without price."

In view of what has been said, these three observations fairly offer themselves to our consideration.

1. That many professors of religion are under very great and dangerous mistakes, in regard to their character.

2. That true holiness is exceedingly valuable, and greatly enriches the soul, by whom it is possessed.

3. That we may safely account, that only to be true holines, which will endure all the tests, appointed or permitted, for its discovery and examination.

The first observation naturally arises from the scope of the text, which is to awaken and convince unsound professors.

The second, is suggested by the use which the Holy Ghost makes of the richest things in nature, to represent the unspeakable worth of Christian graces.

The third, is derived from the very significant metaphor of gold tried in the fire; by which I understand a real work of grace, manifesting and proving itself to be such, during the closest inspection, or under the severest trial. For whatever puts the reality of one's holiness to the proof, whatever scrutinizes and tries it, is to him, what fire is to gold. Hence we read in scripture; "Thou hast tried us as silver is tried." Again: "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried."

CHAPTER II.

Illustrating the observation, That many professors of religion are under very great and dangerous mistakes, in regard to their character.

SECTION I.

All flattery, and especially self-flattery, is criminal and injurious; but self-flattery, in regard to the concerns of salvation, is to the last degree dangerous and destructive. To pretend to goodness which we know we do not possess, is gross hypocrisy. To persuade ourselves, or endeavor to persuade others that we possess goodness, of which we are in reality destitute, is shameful and ruinous dissimulation. But of this, Laodiceans, and self-deceivers in every age, are guilty.

My design in these meditations, is, not to shake the well founded hopes of any man, or to excite unreasonable apprehensions; but to discover the radical and fatal defects, in the basis of many men's expectations of future happiness. Men must judge of their religion by examining its foundation, if that fail, the superstructure is perishable and worthless.

There is a laudable spirit of caution, cherished by the saints, which makes them sensible of the danger of self-deception, and renders them watchful and circumspect; there is also a culpable anxiety and fear, tending only to to gloom and despondency, to which they sometimes give way; by the former they are guarded against evil; by the latter they incur heedless grief, and are restrained from inward peace.

Sometimes good men, indulging groundless fears of hy-

privileges, does but deprive himself of quie
for a short time; whereas he that shuts his eye
evidences of his sin and condemnation, procu
less destruction of his soul. Of this class of
ers the world is full, and with their case I
much to do. *

I shall endeavor, in this chapter, to make
that among professors of religion, many are d
assign the causes of their deception; and to
inferences and reflections as the subject sugg

* "The want of distinguishing in things that
experimental religion, is one of the chief miseries
sing world. It is attended with very many most
quences: multitudes of souls are fatally deluded abo
and their own state; and so are eternally undone:
confirmed in their delusions, and exceedingly p
pride; many sincere Christians are dreadfully perp
ed, tempted, and drawn aside from the way of du
times sadly tainted with false religion, to the gr
Christianity, and hurt of their own souls: some of th
ous and pernicious enemies of religion in the world, (t

SECTION II.

hat many professors of religion are deceived is evi-

From the fact that there are more professors than erts. There are many professors of religion, who Christians only by education;—persons who have n up into the church, but who have never been lated out of the kingdom of darkness into the king- of Christ. Others have been induced by the influ- of custom, by slavish fear, by ambition, or by more orthy motives, to profess Christianity. Now all deceive themselves; and while they accelerate their nal ruin, they greatly increase its aggravations. Let reflect, that to appear, in the view of men, like stians, is one thing; to be Christians indeed, in the of God, is quite another; for except a man be born e Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Many professors are acquainted only with the exals of religion, and practise only an outward compli- with the commands of God. They know nothing of inward, vital religion, which is seated in the affec- of the heart, which subdues its sinful propensities, purifies its desires. But what will their external ormity avail? Or what is it but a miserable imita- of that which lives in good men, and prepares them eaven? Surely it can have no better effect than to hem, at last, to accuse and condemn themselves.*

* If we be not in good earnest in religion, and our wills and nations be not strongly exercised, we are nothing. The s of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in xercises of our hearts, to their nature and importance, unless be lively and powerful. In nothing is vigour in the actings

Certain it is, that there are many professors of this
who, like Jehu, take no heed to walk in the way
Lord God of Israel with their heart; who deceive
selves, or endeavor to deceive others, and who will
or later receive the fearful reward of their doings.

3. That many professors are self-deluded, appear
the circumstance, that in severe trials, numbers fall
Prosperity multiplies false professors; but by adv
the church is disencumbered of them; they are re
from their steadfastness, as dry leaves are carrie
by a tempest. "They go out from us, that it
made manifest that they were not of us." "Wh
bulation or persecution ariseth because of the wor
are quickly offended." Had they been told, at fi
their professions and zeal would terminate thus, p
their reply would have been like that of Hazae
man of God: "What, is thy servant a dog, that h
do this thing?" Alas, how unlike is their brilli
hopeful morning to their dark and gloomy e
These professors have more of the moon than of t
they have little light, little heat, but many change

of our inclinations so requisite, as in religion; and in
lukewarmness so odious."—*Edwards on Religious Affec.*
iv. *of his works, p.* 17.

* "It is with professors of religion, especially such as t
in a time of outpouring of the Spirit of God, as it is with
in the spring; there are vast numbers of them upon
which all look fair and promising; but yet many of th
come to any thing. And many of those, that in a little ti
up, drop off, and rot under the trees; yet for a while look
tiful and gay as others; and not only so, but smell sweet,
forth a pleasant odour; so that we cannot, by any o
certainly distinguish those blossoms which have in the
cret virtue, which will afterwards appear in the fruit.

4. Another proof that there are numerous false professors, is, that many secretly indulge some beloved lust, which, like a worm at the root, cripples and kills them. Such persons may have excellent gifts, and perform various and difficult duties; but pampering one lust, or allowing one secret sin, will destroy them. To cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye; to deny themselves, and forsake all for Christ, requires such heart religion as they do not possess. They study to exhibit a becoming exterior deportment, they refrain from open impieties, and visibly conform to their profession, and hence they imbibe great confidence, and display themselves with much assurance; but they secretly love and practice iniquity, they cherish some known sin, and thus flatter, and deceive, and ruin their souls.

5. Those professors of religion, who are unaccustomed to the daily practice of secret devotion, constitute not a small part of the multitude who are deceived. There are many who attend the public ordinances of religion, and who, either statedly or occasionally, engage in social worship with the family, but whose religion does not lead them to the closet, nor incline them to any unobserved intercourse with heaven. These people call themselves children of God; but their piety comprises nothing so

inward solidity and strength, which shall enable them to bear, and cause them to be perfected by the hot summer sun, that will dry up the others. It is the mature fruit which comes afterwards, and not the beautiful color and smell of the blossoms, that we must judge by. So new converts, (professedly so,) in their talk about things of religion, may appear fair, and be very savory, and the saints may think they talk feelingly. They may relish their talk, and imagine they perceive a divine savor in it, and yet all may come to nothing."—*Edwards on Affections, p.* 113.

personal, or particular, nothing which so much distinguishes them from the heedless world, which renders the hope of salvation so interesting, or the possibility of endless wo so horrible, as to give them a relish for prayer, devout meditation and secret communion with God. They shrink from the idea of retiring by themselves, and laying their hearts open to that invisible Being, that holy God, whom they profess to love and to worship; they contrive therefore to forget their secret, if not all their sins, to be unconscious of their wants, and to impose on themselves, by substituting casual outward formality, for that godliness which has the promise of the life to come. Reader, if thy heart were right with God, and thou didst not cheat thyself with a vain profession, thou wouldst have frequent occasions for the peculiar duties of the closet, which thou wouldst conceal from thy familiar friend. "Charity vaunteth not itself." True piety can, by no means, entirely lay itself open to the eyes of men; public actions and appearance may support its credit, but secret exercises must maintain its life, and supply its purest enjoyment.

6. There are, in these days, many professors, who never made religion their chief concern, and who, therefore, though they have a name to live, are dead in sin. While there are those who "give themselves to the Lord;" "whose conversation and treasure is in heaven;" "the end of whose life is Christ;" who give religion the precedence, both in their affections and their time; and who are constant and unwearied in the service of God; there are also professors, whose religion engrosses not their attention, and occupies little of their time. So far from being the chief object of their solicitude, it is treated as if any thing else was more important.

and when they pretend to engage in it, their thoughts and hearts are somewhere else. It is not their design, in attending to the duties of religion, to honor, or to have fellowship with God, to become conformed to his law, to have their unholy propensities subdued, or the genuineness of their piety tried; they pray as if they prayed not, and hear as if they heard not; and if they derive no benefit from ordinances, if they acquire no animation from their discharge of duties, they are not disappointed, for they anticipated no such effects.

From these considerations, it is sufficiently manifest, that many professors of religion deceive themselves in regard to their character, and the reason of their hopes.

SECTION III.

There are four principal causes of the delusion and dissimulation of false professors.

1. The deceitfulness of the heart. The hearts of such men, and of all the impenitent, "are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." They are so full of sophistry and guile, so changeful and illusive in their operations, and so incurably and perversely inclined to evil, that they will be found, at last, to have been a sufficient cause of men's ruin. The wicked, when finally cast away, will be sensible that the shame and the blame of their perdition is ascribable wholly to themselves They will see that the self-adulation, the hypocrisy, the unbelief, the contempt of serious piety, and the bold indifference to the invitations and threatenings of God's word, which they have practised, were suited to prepare them for endless wo. Verily, "he that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool."

2. The machinations of Satan. False professors are

eminently exposed to the diabolical arts and influence of this roaming adversary; they lay themselves open to his foul suggestions, and, by their love of error, and their fondness of sensuality, they both invite and insure success to, his studied artifice. Hence it is not to be wondered at, that he takes them captive at his own will. He is the god of this world, that blinds the minds of them that believe not, and decoys the thoughtless wretches into hell; they, of all men, are most ready to close with his devices, and yield to his impostures. With reference to them, Basil represents this apostate spirit, as thus insolently addressing Christ; "I have them! I have them! In spite of all thy blood and miracles, thy wooings and beseechings, thy knockings and strivings, I have cozened thee of them at the very gates of heaven; notwithstanding all their illuminations, and tasting of the powers of the world to come, I have wrecked them in the very mouth of the harbor."

3. The effects wrought in many unregenerate professors,—the excitements of feeling, the raptures of fancy, the animation of hope, the bliss of ideal safety, the pleasure of living as they list, without obscuring their prospects, or disturbing their consciences,—greatly increase and confirm their delusions. They do not distinguish between the operations and fruits of the Spirit of God, in the sanctification of men, and the effects of error, of ignorance, of stupidity, of enthusiasm, or of diabolical influence. Their own experience is the standard by which they judge of themselves; and that, not unfrequently, is such as to dazzle and infatuate them. They are ready to say, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Among those who are deceived in this way, some assume the office of religious teachers. Let them

consider the words of Him, by whom teachers must be judged: "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name,—and in thy name done many wonderful works?" To whom the Judge will say, "I never knew you: depart from me."

4. The practice of comparing themselves with others, is a cause of deception among many professors of religion. Thus the Pharisees, by trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others, kept up a high opinion of their own merit. They elevated themselves, by depressing those over whom they affected a superiority. Some false professors mentioned by St. Paul, "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves," proved that they were as deluded as they were foolish. Instead of making one man, or one set of men, a test for the trial of another, God has established his word as the only standard of character, and by this, those who are saints indeed, form an opinion of themselves. But many false professors want a more lax and indefinite rule; they choose to compare themselves with characters that are scandalous, or with such as, in some respect, are subject to reproach. They are sharp sighted to observe other men's faults, as they are their own supposed excellencies; they contemplate the failings of others with derision, and their own doings with admiration. They bless themselves when they behold the impieties of the wicked: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers;" and when they witness actions to which they cannot condescend; "or even as this publican." O what a saint am I, in comparison with these creatures! A Christian may and ought to praise God that he has been made, by grace, to differ from some other men; but he cannot rake

together the enormities of the worst characters, or the infirmities of the best, in order to justify and applaud himself, as these pharisaical deceivers do.

Such are some of the causes of that general delusion and imposture, under which so great a part of the professing world bow down and perish.

SECTION IV.

I shall now endeavor to improve this topic, with as much brevity and closeness of application, as its importance and copiousness will admit.

1. Let me caution you to beware of inferring from what has been said, that all professors of religion are deceivers of themselves and others, and that there is no truth nor integrity in any man: this would be, with intolerable arrogance, to affect the prerogative of God; and, with desperate severity, to judge the hearts of men.

Some men are as apt to conclude that those are hypocrites, whose hearts they measure by their own, as others are to decide that themselves are saints, by comparing their fancied virtues with the vices and crimes of the most abandoned. But, blessed be God, there is some grain amidst the heaps of chaff and rubbish: the devil hath not the entire piece; a remnant, according to election, is really and peculiarly the Lord's.

2. Let none imagine, because so many professors are deceived, that assurance is unattainable. It is indeed one of the rarest and most difficult acquisitions, but is far from impracticable: hence all are commanded to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure."

3. I warn you not to conceal the truths of God, or the graces of his Spirit, nor to be deterred from openly professing them, because many deceive themselves and

others, by a vain profession. Ought you to hide what you have, because another pretends to what he has not? The possession of holiness in your own soul, is, indeed, what secures you from perdition; but the profession of it is what honors God, edifies the saints, and sometimes awakens sinners. Ostentation is sinful, but a serious and humble profession is an unquestionable duty.

SECTION V.

Having guarded what has been said from abuse, I hasten to a more direct and special improvement of the subject. And surely I cannot better accomplish this, nor more faithfully serve you, my readers, than by warning you to see to it, that you be not of the number who deceive themselves. Suffer me then closely to press that great apostolical caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." O professors, look carefully to your foundation; be not high minded, but fear. You may have done and suffered many things for religion's sake; you may have excellent gifts, and great comforts,—much zeal for God, and high confidence of your integrity, and all this may be right; but possibly it may be counterfeit and vain. Perhaps you have, sometimes, upon examination, pronounced yourselves upright; but remember that the Searcher of hearts has not yet delivered his final sentence; if he weigh you in the balance of truth, and find you wanting, how will you be confounded and dismayed! Saints may look upon you with approbation, but they see not as God seeth; you may have a name to live, while dead.

You know the fate of the apostate professors mentioned in the gospel: take heed that their case be not your own. Do they not all, as it were, cry to you with one

voice, 'If you would not come where we are, flatter not yourselves as we did; if you expect a better portion, be sure that you get better hearts: had we been more self-suspicious, we had been more safe.' *

I would not frighten you with groundless alarms, but I would fain prevent fatal mistakes. Do you find your hearts deceitful in many things? Do you not shuffle over secret duties? Do you not condemn in others, evils which you scarce reprove in yourselves? Are there not many selfish ends in your performances? Do you not find that you are far less affected with a great deal of service done for God, by others, than with a little done by yourselves! Is it not hard for you to look, without envy, upon the excellencies of other men, or without pride, upon your own? Are you not troubled by a busy

* Mr. Bunyan gives the following description of apostacy and despair, in the dialogue between Christian and the Man in an iron cage:

"Then said Christian to the man, What art thou?

"The man answered, I am what I was not once.

"*Chr.* What wast thou once?

"*Man.* I was once a fair and flourishing professor, both in mine own eyes, and also in the eyes of others: I was once, as I thought, fair for the celestial city, and had then even joy at the thoughts that I should get thither.

Chr. Well but what art thou now?

"*Man.* I am *now* a man of *despair*, and am shut up in *it* as in *this* iron cage. I cannot get out. O *now* I cannot!

"*Chr.* But how camest thou in this condition?

"*Man.* I left off to watch and be sober: I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the light of the word, and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; I tempted the devil and he is come to me; I have provoked God to anger, and he has left me; I have so hardened my heart, that I *cannot* repent."—*Pil. Prog.* p. 57.

devil, as well as by a bad heart? Hath not he, that circuits the whole world, observed you? Hath he not studied your constitutional failings, and discovered the sin that most easily besets you? Hath he less malice towards your souls, than towards those around you? Surely you are in the very thicket of temptations; thousands of snares are on every side. Alas! how few of the professing and expecting world, win heaven at last. How hard it is to be upright; with what difficulty are even the righteous saved! Therefore search your hearts; and may this caution penetrate your inmost souls: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Away with such uncharitable censuring of others, and be more just and severe in rebuking yourselves. Away with unprofitable controversies: spend your thoughts, rather, upon this momentous question, 'Am I sound, or am I rotten at heart?' 'Am I a new creature or the old, disguised in borrowed clothing?' Let it be your prayer, that you may not be deceived in this point. Pray and labor, that you may not be given up to a heedless and vain spirit, and then have religious duties for a rattle, to beguile and hush your consciences.

Surely that groundwork, upon which your hope for eternal life is built, cannot be too safely laid. I dare promise you, that when you come to die, you will not regret having devoted much time and attention to this matter. Whilst others, then, are panting after the dust of the earth, and crying who will show us any good, do you be endeavouring after the assurance of the love of God, and seeking to make your calling and election sure.

Deceive not yourselves with names and notions; they cannot change your heart. If you are still impenitent, if you have not been renewed and sanctified by the Spirit

of God, it matters little by what name you are called, or how warmly you advocate the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel; you are in the sight of God a guilty perishing sinner.

Once more, my friends, I warn you, to examine the foundation upon which you rest: deceive not yourselves; behold the Judge, who knows your works, standeth at the door.

SECTION VI.

To conclude: If, as we have reason to believe, a great many professors of religion, and others whose hopes are not less sanguine, are fatally deceived, then it becomes those, who have good reason to believe that they are indeed the children of God, to praise and glorify him for his mercy, as long as they live. There are doubtless many real Christians, who do not themselves perceive such evidence of their gracious state, as fully to satisfy them: but let them not be discouraged; let them resolutely persevere, and constantly live as the grace of God teacheth. And let such as have daily, unequivocal evidence of their sanctification, freely enjoy the elevated happiness, and the transporting anticipations, peculiar to their state of mind.

CHAPTER III.

herein the observation, That holiness, or saving grace, is exceedingly valuable, and greatly enriches its possessor, is elucidated and improved.

SECTION I.

Our Lord employs terms relating to the most pure, e most valuable, and most magnificent things in the easures of nature, to represent saving grace, or true liness; and surely that must be the greatest moral od, which can be but faintly shadowed by the richest tural objects.

We may easily satisfy ourselves from several consider-ons, that the value of saving grace is not to be describ- or conceived.

1. If we consider it in respect to its cause, we shall d that it is a peculiar work, or fruit of the divine Spirit; ho, on this account is called, "the Spirit of grace," d "the Spirit of holiness." All the rules of morality, ith all possible human diligence and effort, alone, can ver produce one gracious act, or one holy exercise. ch, indeed, is the incomparable worth of efficacious ace, that all other gifts of the Spirit are represented scripture to be comparatively worthless.

2. The nature of saving grace, implies its unspeaka-le value. It is that by which the saints are made to emble God in moral beauty and goodness; that which nders them objects of the Divine complacency, and fits em to glorify and enjoy their Creator and Redeemer r ever.

3. It appears peculiarly excellent, if we reflect, that

it is bestowed only upon those whom God has elected to everlasting life. It is not, like many other gifts, made common to all, but is imparted to those only who are chosen in Christ Jesus, and made heirs of glory.

4. The influence and fruits of saving grace in the souls of saints, proclaim its unspeakable worth.

It elevates and ennobles, adorns and beautifies the soul, it raises the affections to heaven, employs them upon divine objects, and transforms the heart into the image of God; it preserves the saints from known and allowed iniquity, so that although sin still works in them, it cannot bring forth fruit unto death; it establishes them in faith and peace, on the Rock of Ages, whence they shall never be removed; it is the root of all the fruit which they bring forth unto God in this world,—of every gracious word in their lips, and every gracious work in their hands,—be the matter of their good thoughts, their heavenly discourses, and holy prayers, never so excellent, grace is the root and source of them.

5. Its exceeding value will appear, if we further consider its properties. As has been observed, the most expressive epithets are employed to describe it. I may add, that it is unfailing and immortal. It is a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. It will not fail and perish with your mortal body; but, with the soul, from which it is inseparable, will ascend to glory. You may out-live your friends, your estates, and whatever else you now possess, but if you have true holiness, it will endure as long as you exist.

6. Nor is its value less conspicuous, in the design with which it is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, which is to purify us from all iniquity, to free us from imperfection, and to render us meet for the heavenly inheritance.

—for the service and enjoyment of God in the world above.

7. The means adopted to procure the dispensation of grace to men, and those employed in producing and preserving holiness in the saints, are conclusive evidences of its infinite worth. The incarnation, the sufferings, and the intercession of Jesus Christ, were necessary to prepare the way; the special agency of the Holy Spirit is necessary to produce the effect. The ordinances and institutions of the gospel were first appointed, and have been continued, in order that holiness might be produced and preserved in the hearts of saints; nay, the ordinary dispensations of Providence, are designed, in some way to subserve this purpose.

8. The peculiar regard vouchsafed by the Most High God, to every degree, every exercise, and every fruit of holiness, in his people, demonstrates its unspeakable importance and worth: he who made the jewel, best knows its value.

9. That holiness is a most excellent and desirable thing, is shown by the hypocritical pretences made to it all over the professing world. If it did not confer some singular advantage, why should every one pant for the reputation of possessing it? But so it is, that the devil himself conceals many of his lures and hooks of temptation with a show of grace; knowing, as he does, that sin has nothing beautiful or winning in itself, by which to entice, he disguises it under a pretence of goodness. Let hypocrites and self-deceivers consider what they shall answer at last, when it is demanded; 'If grace were evil, why did you so affect the reputation of it? if good, why did you content yourself with the empty name of it?'

10. In a word, the incomparable value of saving grace,

is manifested by the esteem which all good men have for it. Holiness is the sum of all their prayers, the scope of all their endeavors, the substance of their joys, the relief of their afflictions and sufferings; it constitutes their riches and their glory.

SECTION II.

Improvement and Application.

1. Is saving grace thus valuable and precious? Beware, ye who possess it, lest your hearts should be elated with spiritual pride. You have need often to reflect on your former state of sin and condemnation; and on your present ill-desert and imperfection; to consider how and by whom you have been made to differ from them that perish; to ask, what you have that you have not received; to feel your weakness, your dependence, and your obligations; and to remember that it is the nature of holiness to render men humble and lowly, in heart and life.

2. Is holiness more excellent than gold? Well then may the poorest Christians content themselves with the allotments of Providence. Ye who are destitute of this world's goods, but rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised; ye who feel the rigors of temporal poverty; but who have treasures in heaven, think of your imperishable wealth, and neither thirst for an earthly portion, nor murmur at temporary wants. Thousands, alas! who are pennyless, and thousands who have worldly wealth, are without Christ and without hope.

3. If holiness is thus valuable, then those Christians who suffer it to decline, or who do not grow in grace, incur such loss as all this world's goods are not sufficient to repair.

4. If holiness is of such worth and importance, then the ordinances and institutions of religion, and all the means adapted to preserve and increase it, ought to be highly esteemed, and diligently employed.

5. If saving grace be so exeellent, it becomes saints to be peculiarly watchful and circumspect in times of degeneracy and temptation. We have read of Christians who resisted unto blood, striving against sin,—who chose to part with their lives, rather than relax in their piety: if we would endure unto the end, we must follow their example. We live in an age of deception and temptation. Many seeming Christians have fallen and lost all; and many real Christians have lost so much, that instead of again enjoying the comforts of piety in this world, they are likely to go to the grave, repeating the lamentation of Job; "O that it were with me as in months past!"

6. Let me urge and entreat you to make it the great business of your life, the chief concern of every day, to grow in grace and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Cultivate every advantage of time and place; improve the society of God's people, and let your closets testify that your love of holiness is stronger that death.

CHAPTER IV.

In which the observation,—That we may safely account that only to be true holiness, which will endure all the tests appointed or permitted for its discovery and examination, —is open, and the plan of the whole treatise sketched.

SECTION I.

It has pleased God to place all his people, in this

world, in a state of trial; he first tries, then crowns them. James i. 12. No man can determine whether his graces are true or false, until they are examined by something, which, to them, shall be what fire is to gold. The deceived Laodiceans imagined themselves to be rich in grace, but they proved to be wretchedly poor; wherefore Christ counsels them to buy of him gold tried in the fire,—true holiness which should endure the severest scrutiny.

The scriptures plainly recognise a trial of men's opinions, as well as of their graces: but of the former I shall have occasion to say little. Doubtless they may endanger and obstruct their salvation, by unscriptural sentiments; yet if they have holiness of heart, notwithstanding some false opinions, "they shall be saved, though it be as by fire:" but if they are devoid of holiness, the most correct speculation will avail them nothing; they must perish, and perish without remedy.

The trial of a man's graces, or religious affections, is all important; as they are, so is his safety and happiness, and so, his prospect for eternity.

This trial may be considered in two respects:

1. As it is to be performed by ourselves; "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves;"—scrutinize your hearts in the light of Divine truth; ascertain and demonstrate, whether your affections are holy.

2. As it is executed by Him "who searcheth the heart, and judgeth according to truth."

With a view to both these kinds of trial, but especially the former, I propose in this treatise,

I. To show, what tries the genuineness of Christian graces, as fire tries gold.

II. To exhibit the ends, for which God appoints such trials of the holiness of his people, in this world.

III. To prove, that such only is true holiness, as will bear these trials.

IV. To improve and apply the whole.

SECTION II.

Before I enter into particulars, it seems needful to observe, that the subject, to which we are approaching, is full of difficulties. Without much cautious discrimination and solicitude, with regard to the various and dissimilar capacities, attainments and circumstances, of different Christians, one could hope to do little else, but confuse and mislead. Nor is less care necessary in the application of tests, or signs; they should be well examined and approved, before we try ourselves or others by them.

Signs or tests of character, are by some distinguished as exclusive, inclusive, and positive. Exclusive marks serve to shut out old pretenders, by showing them that they are utterly devoid of a saving work of grace. They are commonly taken from some indispensable ordinary duty, as praying or hearing; which men may, indeed, perform, and yet have no degree of holiness; but, the neglect of which, demonstrates the total absence of any work of grace.

Inclusive marks serve to discover the degree, rather than the existence of holiness, and are intended for comfort, rather than conviction; if we perceive them in ourselves, we shall find not only real, but eminent piety; as they arise from the higher exercises of grace, in confirmed and mature Christians.

Between these, there are marks or evidences, called positive, which are always found in those, and those only,

who have been regenerated. In the application of these, great care is requisite, since they relate as well to the feeblest, as to the most advanced Christian. It is especially necessary to beware of representing the particular exercises or experience of those who are esteemed eminent in knowledge and grace, as a rule for those whose attainments are small. This practice is justly reprobated for its absurdity, and its injurious effects.

These things being premised, I will now proceed to show what things in particular, try the temper and state of our souls;—"What tries the genuineness of Christian graces, as fire tries gold."

It is true that all the circumstances of our life, every event that has relation to us, may make some discovery of our hearts; but some limits must be prescribed to this treatise: I shall therefore show, in the following order, what trials are made of our graces by prosperity and adversity, by our inward corruptions, our active duties, and, lastly, by our sufferings on account of religion.

SECTION III.

Prosperity, worldly success, outward enjoyments, riches, honors,—try men's hearts, and reveal their thoughts. Some may fancy the fire of prosperity to be designed rather for comfort than for trial, rather to compose, than to search us; but scarcely any thing more clearly demonstrates the falseness or soundness of religion; it is to grace, what fire is to gold. Particularly, it occasions an exhibition of the self-flattery and delusion of those who have had a name to live while dead; and of the unequivocal evidences of true religion, in real saints.

Among the proofs, thus exhibited, of dissimulation and deceit, are the following:

1. Prosperity occasions, in some men, a stupid forgetfulness of God and neglect of the duties of religion. They fall asleep in the lap of abundance, and dream not that there is a God to be served, and a soul to be saved. Their carnal pleasures and enjoyments, and the care of their earthly affairs, leave no time for prayer, or for reflections concerning death and futurity. Like Herod, they are lifted up with conceits of their own greatness and importance; and, like him, they mock the supremacy of Jehovah, or contemn his authority, instead of obeying his commands. They are so busied in serving and gratifying themselves, that usually, they lose the faint appearances of piety, which, in other circumstances, they might have exhibited.

2. Prosperity, meeting with one who is graceless, engrosses his thoughts and affections, and makes him wholly sensual. Earthly things have a tendency to transform men's hearts into their own similitude,—to assimilate them to their nature; and they produce their full effect upon those whose religion is mere pretence. Such, in times of prosperity,—when temptations are presented, and the means of indulgence within reach,—will abandon themselves to sensual gratifications, and show to the world the depravity of their hearts and dissoluteness of their character. It is true, that prosperity may have a very unhappy influence on the minds of good men; but it can never produce, in them, such effects as have been mentioned: the allurements of forbidden objects and the enticements of sin, will be counteracted by the principles, the habits, and feelings of genuine piety. Some, indeed, confessedly destitute of true religion and sur-



stream of sensuality; but all who are affected by prosperous circumstances, are evidently g

3. Mere pretenders to religion, self-deceiv semblers, are apt, when prosperity surround only to lose all concern for their own salva harden themselves against the judgments of G calamities and suffering which his people e stances of this kind are but too common; and nate characters which cannot be mistaken.

Such are some of the ways in which pros rates upon those who have not true religi staying to be more minute on this part of th proceed, in the following section, to show the prosperity on the people of God.

SECTION IV.

That the saints sometimes fall into tempt be denied; and doubtless the trial of prosper covers in them the workings of sin; but its g ence upon God's children, is such as to rend ces more conspicuous, and their uprightness r

every one of them, when thus tried, which will check d allay the risings of vanity and ambition. God's peo- e have seen, and still see, too much of their own hearts, much of this world, and too much of the divine excel- nce and loveliness of heavenly objects, to be easily elat- , or long satisfied with worldly prosperity; they con- ler the temptations and dangers accompanying it, as well the obligations and responsibility which it occasions, d feel the motives, thus furnished, to humility and self- asement. They consider themselves as stewards of od, to whose care much has been committed, and from hom, therefore, much will be required.

2. Prosperity excites the love and gratitude of the irts to God, the author of their mercies: while it in- mes the sinner's lusts, it fills the good man's heart with nevolent and grateful affections. Not that these out- rd things are the primary reasons, or motives of his ve to God; far from it: he loves him when he takes em away, as well as when he bestows them; but God nctifies prosperity to his people, makes it conducive to eir spiritual welfare, and subservient to their useful- ss in the world.

3. The smiles of Providence usually render holy men creasingly watchful against sin. Thus they reflect; Hath God favored and prospered me? Then I am der the greater obligation to obey and please him:" hey cannot sin, because grace hath abounded; as they ould not dare to sin, that grace might abound.

4. A child of God will not be satisfied with all the pros- rity and outward comforts in the world, as his portion. hen Providence became more than ordinarily bountiful temporal things to Luther, he became anxious, and rnestly protested against being put off with them. A

CHAPTER V.

Showing what trial is made of men's hearts by

SECTION. I.

THAT adversity is adapted to try men's hear
doubt, who have either studied the scriptures
ed human experience. When the dross of
and the rust of hypocrisy, had nearly eaten o
of religion among the Jews, God said, "I wil
and try them;" accordingly they were cast i
nace of affliction, and tried.

Prosperity multiplies professors, but adve
them to such a test, that the precious are sep
the vile. Job was tried by adversity, and, alt
dross was discovered, he came forth as gold.
sity, is brought out to view, not only the hy

SECTION II.

The following particulars, relating to adversity, may apply both to saints and sinners.

1. Both may entertain fears of adversity, when they perceive its approach. While impending judgments cause the sinners in Zion to tremble, and fill hypocrites with fearfulness; saints also, though for different reasons, may be agitated with concern and apprehension.

2. When the cup of affliction comes, the holy as well as the sinful, may receive it with reluctance. The wicked will, indeed, ever loath and resent it; and, though accompanied by a thousand mitigations to the righteous, they also may shrink from it.

3. Troubles, disappointments and pain, may sometimes produce impatience in saints, as well as in sinners. Flesh and blood can hardly endure anguish and privation with composure. But if, in such circumstances, grace is not always so powerful in God's people, as to overcome the propensity to disquiet, it will restrain them from such indulgence as the wicked allow.

4. The ungodly as well as the godly, may be driven to their closets and their knees by adversity; the former perhaps for the first time; the latter with increased punctuality and engagedness.

I need not detail the different motives of saints and sinners, when in similar conditions; their external appearance and conduct are in some respects alike: I therefore pass on to those things which are peculiar to each.

SECTION III.

Here, in the first place, let us consider the discoveries made by adversity of the hearts of unsanctified men.

1. An unsanctified man is not easily made to recognize and acknowledge the hand of God, in the calamities and troubles which have befallen him. He is prone to refer them to some natural cause; or to suppress the idea of any producer of them; or to charge them to the malice or negligence of men. Thus the creature bounds his horizon; and he contrives to secure his conscience from alarm.

2. Unsanctified men are not apt, in seasons of adversity, to retire into their closets, to search their hearts, to ascertain what they have done, to repent of their wickedness, and submit themselves to God. Afflictions rarely lead them to self-examination; they do not choose to think that they have done any thing which occasions their troubles.

3. A man destitute of real religion, if left to his own choice, would prefer sin to affliction, and really consider it less evil; he can contemplate the defilement of his soul with composure, rather than suffer the loss of his goods, his pleasures, or his present ease: and thus the unsoundness of his heart is discovered. The saints, on the contrary, will never knowingly consent to the commission of sin, if it might prevent ever so much personal suffering or loss.

4. Unregenerate men in adversity, will turn from creature to creature, in pursuit of comfort and relief, instead of leaving all creatures, and repairing to God for support; and when all their creature comforts fail, they sink in despondency.

5. An unsanctified man never comes out of the furnace of affliction, purified, humbled, and made better than when he was cast into it; the fire does not consume his dross; but the more he is afflicted, the worse he becomes.

The reason is plain; afflictions themselves cannot purify men's souls, and those which come upon the wicked, are not sanctified to them. Think of this, ye that have had numberless afflictions of one kind or other, but have derived no benefit from any of them.

SECTION IV.

I suppose the reader may now be desirous to know, what effects adversity usually has upon sincere, humble Christians: but before I proceed, let it be observed, that they realize these effects not so much while the trial continues, as after it is past, when they have opportunity for calm reflection. The fruits of sanctified affliction are lasting, and they affect the Christian's whole temper and deportment: still, some particulars may be mentioned, which apply to all.

1. Every real Christian, in time of affliction and adversity, will make God his refuge, and look to him for comfort and relief. "I found," saith David, "sorrow and trouble, then called I upon the name of the Lord."

2. The people of God particularly recognize his providence in all their adversities and troubles, whatever instruments may intervene. And this apprehension of the Divine agency, is fundamental to that communion with God, which saints in affliction maintain; and to the holy submission and heavenly composure which they feel.

3. Christians are heartily disposed to justify God in the severest afflictions which come upon them, as well as in all his other dealings: the proofs of this in scripture are so numerous, that it would be superfluous to quote them. They may receive treatment from men, which they are conscious they do not deserve; but if God should add condemnation to affliction, they would vindicate not only

his character and government, but his dispensations to them.

4. Good men in adversity examine themselves, and endeavour to ascertain why they are afflicted; to find what they have done or neglected, on account of which God contendeth with them. Their prayer is, "That which I see not, teach thou me; show me, if there is any evil way in me."

5. Every real Christian deliberately chooses to continue in adversity, rather than to be delivered from it by any sinful means. Christians are not insensible to pain, but, rather than sin against God, they can cheerfully submit to disappointments, privations and sufferings.

6. The people of God fail not to bless him for sanctified afflictions; esteeming the happy effects of them on their own minds more highly than deliverance from them. If their affections are weaned from this world, if their sinful propensities are mortified, if they are advanced in the divine life, and made more meet for heaven, by means of adversity, they never think it too great or too long continued.

CHAPTER VI.

Discovering the soundness or corruption of men's hearts by the manner in which they regard indwelling sin.

SECTION I.

NOTHING more thoroughly discloses the real state of men's hearts, than the manner in which they regard indwelling sin, or the practice of sin: this topic, therefore, deserves a careful and ample elucidation.

Several considerations relative to the views and feelings entertained by holy and sinful men, respecting the practice of sin, and sin in the heart, must be mentioned, in order to manifest who are the children of God, and who of the wicked one.

SECTION II.

By considering the different reasons for which saints and sinners respectively *abstain* from the indulgence and commission of sin, we shall see the contrariety between their characters, and may, perhaps, ascertain to which class we belong.

1. A false professor, or unrenewed man, may abstain from some sins, because they are inconsistent with the commission of others. Thus hypocrisy and profaneness, prodigality and covetousness, are opposed to each other, so that but one can reign at a time.

1. An unsanctified man may be hindered from the commission of some sins by the restraint of Divine Providence. It often happens, when men have conceived sin, and are ready to execute it, that they are unexpectedly prevented; and through these interpositions of Providence, by which the designs of the wicked are overthrown, the world is saved from numberless, if not from infinite evils.

3. A wicked man may abstain from some sins, merely because the commission of them is inconsistent with his constitutional make, or repugnant to his health. Thus some men cannot be drunkards, if they would; others cannot be covetous and base.

4. Men totally destitute of moral goodness, may be deterred from the commission of many sins by the force of education, the principles of morality, the authority of *superiors, or the influence* of popular opinion.

5. Such men may abstain from many sins, through fear of their temporal consequences. Thus they may avoid such sins as are punishable by human laws, and such as are followed by infamy and detestation among men; and some even look further, to the punishment of sin hereafter; they are not afraid to sin, but they are afraid to burn.

These are some of the reasons why ungodly men sometimes refrain from the commission of some sins.

SECTION III.

The reasons, on account of which the saints abstain from indulging sin in the heart, or committing it outwardly, are such as manifest them to be children of God.

1. A primary reason why they abstain from sins of every kind, is, that all sin is opposition to the Being whom they love supremely, and who is worthy of all love and obedience. The love of God, which is shed abroad in their hearts, renders the indulgence of sinful feelings and actions peculiarly painful to them, and, so far as it prevails, is an effectual restraint.

2. The saints cherish a holy fear of God, which renders the indulgence of sin exceedingly odious and repugnant to them, and operates as an universal restraint. This fear exists wherever holy love and adoring reverence are exercised towards the Supreme Being, and good men are as much actuated by it in secret as in public; it keeps alive the reflection, that the eye of Omniscience is upon them.

3. They feel a settled aversion to the indulgence of sin, on account of its evil and injurious nature, its polluting and debasing influence, and its horrible effects; they have an abhorrence of it on its own account, which

greatly restrains them from sinful thoughts and feelings, as well as actions.

4. The people of God abstain from sin, because it is repugnant to the holy principles by which they are actuated, and contrary to the pious habits which it is their happiness to cultivate. They find their enjoyment in the performance of duty, and feel the influence of a thousand motives to constancy in the discharge of it; but the indulgence of iniquity, in heart or life, fills them with regret and misery; it wounds their own souls, obstructs their peace, and dishonors the cause in which their present and eternal interests are involved.

5. It is the nature of that repentance which characterizes the saints, to turn them from sin in every form. They hate and abhor it for its own sake, for its nature, for its intrinsic evil; they loathe themselves on account of it; they are filled with holy sorrow, with ingenuous self-condemnation, abasement and regret, in view of it, as committed against God. Thus those who have felt the workings of genuine repentance, are, as it were, impelled to abstain from every kind of disobedience.

6. The children of God remember that the blessed Jesus suffered the death of the cross on account of sin: "therefore, the love of Christ constraineth them; for they thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again. Their old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that henceforth they should not serve sin."

SECTION IV.

The character of saints and sinners, respectively, is

manifested by their *hatred of sin.* A few particulars will suffice to shew why the wicked sometimes hate sin.

1. Although an unholy man will not hate sin for its own sake, nor as existing in himself, yet he may exercise a kind of hatred toward it as exhibited in others. Thus a proud man may hate the appearance of pride in his neighbor. He that has a beam in his own eye, a grossly corrupt heart, or depraved practice, may be quick to espy a mote in another's eye, some comparatively venial fault, and be swelled with disgust and aversion on account of it.

2. A wicked man may hate sin, as a criminal may hate the gallows, for its effects; its guilt, its intrinsic evil, excites no concern, but its connection with hell is frightful and odious. The unsound professor sometimes wishes that there were no threatenings in the Bible against sin. When sin entices, "I would, saith he, but I fear the consequences; could I separate thee from perdition, I would gladly comply."

3. That hatred of sin, which sinners, from various motives, may sometimes feel, is not habitual and permanent; it is not such as greatly to weaken their love of iniquity in themselves, or their approbation of it in the general practice of the world.

The people of God hate sin for totally different reasons, and their hatred is of an opposite nature.

1. They hate it because it is evil in itself, because it is opposed to the Supreme Being and to all goodness, and ruinous in its influence and effects. Its evil and odious nature excites hatred and opposition, wherever the love of holiness exists.

2. They hate it in themselves, more than as exhibited by others; for they are more affected by the conscious-

ness of their own sins, than by the consideration of those which they perceive in their neighbors.

3. They hate not this and that sin merely, but sins of every description, all sin; which no hypocrite, or self-deceiver, or unregenerate man, can ever pretend.

4. They hate sin with an irreconcileable aversion; nothing could induce them to regard it as they once did, they have begun to oppose it, and will never cease to abhor and contend against it, until this warfare shall cease to be necessary.

5. Their hatred of it is supreme: they hate it as the root and essence of all evil; their aversion to it is equalled, in strength, only by their love of holiness.

6. Such is their detestation of sin, that they gladly cherish the thoughts of death, as the means of their deliverance from it with all its odious and defiling accompaniments.

SECTION V.

The *troubles and sorrows* which men have *on account of sin*, discover who has genuine, and who false religion.

All concern on account of sin does not imply sincerity or true religion; some have reason to be alarmed in view of their concern itself.

1. Such are they who are troubled when they have committed some gross sins which startle the natural conscience, but who are not filled with anxiety, and sorrow, and penitence, for secret sins, for sins of thought, for sins which defile the soul, for all sin.

2. They undoubtedly have graceless hearts, who are distressed at the discovery of their sins by others, but who are not troubled on account of their guilt. Multitudes there are of this class: they are not awed by the

consideration that God sees them; they are concerned chiefly, that their appearance before men may be reputable; they scruple not to commit ten sins against God, in order to hide one from the eyes of men.

3. An unholy man may be greatly distressed with the sufferings or embarrassments which his sins have brought upon him, while he regards not the sins themselves.

But the distress and anxiety of the saints, on account of sin, are of another kind, and imply a very different character.

1. They are troubled because God is dishonored, because his holy law is violated, and the interests of his kingdom disregarded or opposed.

2. They are troubled because sin defiles and debases their souls; renders them unfit for the presence and enjoyment of a holy God; and interrupts their love of purity.

3. Sin brings trouble and sorrow to the people of God, by occasioning the withdrawment of his gracious presence, and obstructing their communion with him.

4. Their distress and anguish on account of sin, are far greater, far more pungent, than other men feel; they can bear other troubles, while they nearly sink under those occasioned by sin.

5. They give vent to the sorrow and misery, which they feel on account of sin, rather in secret than in the presence even of their most intimate acquaintance; indeed, they can hardly express what they feel to mortals, but God knows their hearts, and to him they can unbosom themselves, without embarrassment or fear of misapprehension.

6. They never obtain relief from these troubles by such means as unsanctified men employ; they apply for

help to the Physician of souls, and are relieved only when they obtain pardon, submission and peace.

SECTION VI.

Let us now consider the difference between saints and sinners, in regard to their *subjection to the dominion of sin.* The scriptures plainly teach us, that the wicked willingly yield themselves to the reigning power of sin, and that the righteous do not: it will be necessary to show what may be common to them both, in relation to this subject; what distinguishes those who are under the dominion of sin; and what is peculiar to those who have been freed from the bondage of sin and death, in order to judge correctly of our own character.

1. Both saints and sinners may be guilty of gross and scandalous offences; but we cannot thence infer, that sin reigns in one as well as in the other. None are free from the workings of indwelling sin; which may sometimes hurry good men into uncommon acts of wickedness, but which the wicked willingly and habitually indulge.

2. Nor does it follow that both are under the dominion of sin, from the mere fact that they are repeatedly guilty of the same acts of wickedness, though such repetition on the part of one who professes religion, tends greatly to bring his sincerity into question.

3. Though a saint, under certain circumstances, may be impatient of reproof for sin as the wicked are, yet from that alone it cannot safely be concluded that he, like them, is under the power of sin.

4. If some particular sin has more power than another in a good man as well as in sinners, it is not therefore certain that he is as much under the dominion of that sin *as they are.*

5. Though both good and bad men commit sins against knowledge, it will not thence follow, that such sins reign in the former as they do in the latter.

SECTION VII.

I proceed to notice some things by which the dominion of sin is implied.

1. The dominion of sin consists in its prevailing sway over men, and their voluntary subjection to it; hence, deliberate consent to acts of wickedness, or to sinful thoughts and feelings, proves that sin reigns in the heart. Good men do not thus consent, though they may every day commit sin, and sometimes through the violence of temptation fall into gross iniquity.

2. The habitual practice of sin, shows its dominion over the heart.

3. Delight in the ways of iniquity, implies the uncontrolled authority of sin, and a willing subjection to it; hence it is said of the servants of sin, "that they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations."

4. Impatience of Christ's government and service, weariness of serious exercises and pious habits, and love of amusement, indicate a heart subject to the dominion of sin.

There remain to be considered some particulars, to show that the saints are not in subjection to sin as the wicked are.

1. If they fall into sin, they cannot reflect on it without shame and sorrow: but the wicked either derive satisfaction from the review of their sinful indulgences, or with stupid insensibility dismiss them from their recollection.

2. When the people of God fall into one sin, they are greatly excited by that, to guard against the commission of others: not so the servants of sin; the more they practise iniquity the more their inclination to sin is strengthened.

3. It is the prevailing desire and earnest prayer of the saints, to be in every respect freed from sin,—from the love, the influence, and the practice of it; on the contrary those who serve sin, consider no bondage to be liberty; they love their lusts and would esteem deliverance from them a hardship.

4. The saints pray for nothing more frequently or more ardently, than to be kept from the commission of sin; they implore nothing more earnestly than the assistance of God's grace, to fortify them against temptations; they have scarcely any occasions of more lively gratitude and joy, than are furnished by those interpositions of Providence, which prevent their falling into sin; they use their own best endeavors, to avoid the occasions of sin; they are restless and unhappy when they have gone astray; and they have comfort and peace only when piously engaged in the discharge of some duty; from all which it is evident that they are not under the dominion of sin, and do not allowedly practise it.

SECTION VIII.

There remains to be considered, one particular with reference to the manner in which men regard sin; it is their *opposition to it*, whether in heart or practice.

1. There is an universal, and a particular opposition to sin; the former is maintained by the regenerate, the latter may be exerted by unregenerate men. As the saints hate so they oppose every false way; and they must

needs do so, for they hate and oppose sin on its own account because it is sin: with them, therefore, there can be no reservation, no favorite lust, which will not, with sin in every form, meet their aversion and resistance.

But on the contrary, if unsanctified men, whether hypocrites, carnal professors, or self-deceivers, make any opposition to open immoralities, they will reserve and cherish their own secret sins, their favorite lusts, their accustomed forms of iniquity; for they are not opposed to sin as such, but rather to its disgraceful or fatal effects.

2. The opposition of the saints to sin, is founded not merely nor chiefly in the consciences, but in their hearts; whereas if wicked men discountenance it from any other than worldly motives, their dislike arises so entirely from the remonstrances of conscience, that their hearts will, at the same time, love and defend it as earnestly as ever.

There is an irreconcileable enmity and aversion, between a holy heart and all sin; therefore the reason, the conscience, and the affections of good men, are opposed to it: but sin is the very element of unholy hearts, the wicked love its ways, and if their consciences oppose it, they hate their consciences rather than the thing opposed.

3. Sin is habitually and perpetually opposed by the people of God; they have waged a war of extermination against it, and while the enemy is unsubdued, will never cease to contend; but the partial opposition of sinners is unsteady and transient, being remitted and renewed as interest or caprice, or slavish fear shall direct.

4. They who are sanctified, oppose the root as well as the branches, the existence as well as the influence and effects of sin; but the wicked are concerned only to prevent its unhappy consequences.

5. The saints, in the strength of the Lord and the power of his might, exert themselves to oppose sin; but the ungodly trust in an arm of flesh, in the strength of their resolutions, or the security of their self-righteousness; the weapons which they employ in this warfare are not spiritual but carnal, and therefore impotent and futile.

6. Such is the opposition made by the saints against sin, that their unholy propensities are subdued, their sanctification is promoted, and their progress in the divine life accelerated; but the wicked gain no advantage by their feeble and inconstant proceedings against sin,—they may, in their way, pray and hear, and vow and resolve, and when all is done, they are still the servants of sin, their corruptions are unsubdued, and their hearts devoid of holiness.

CHAPTER VII.

Disclosing the trial which is made of men's hearts, by the manner in which they perform the duties of religion.

The following observations will illustrate this topic, and show the difference between saints and sinners,—between those who perform their religious duties acceptably, and those who do not.

1. The designs and desires of men, when they attempt to discharge their religious duties, show what they are at heart.

The designs and expectations of hypocrites, self-deceivers, and other unsanctified men, are ever low and contracted; adapted to answer their worldly ends, or merely to quiet their consciences; but those of God's

people, on the contrary, are liberal and elevated, suited to glorify God and procure important blessings to themselves.

2. The objects which occupy men's hearts, when they attempt to engage in the duties of religion, will lead to a discovery of their character.

Those who are destitute of real holiness, take little heed to their hearts, being comparatively indifferent whether they are wholly unaffected, or employed upon earthly objects; but it is the earnest wish and endeavor of the saints, to have their hearts fully occupied with divine things, to have their attention fixed, their affections elevated, and their motives pure.

3. The conscientiousness of men in the discharge of their private, as well as public duties, must not be overlooked in estimating their characters. Unsanctified men may be driven by their consciences to the closet and the sanctuary, but they are not conscientious either in statedly repairing to them or in performing their appropriate duties; a thousand worldly motives may, indeed, influence them to affect religion in public, which will not allure them into retirement for the purposes of piety; but to a scrupulous attention to either public or private duties of religion, from such motives as the gospel inculcates, they are utter strangers. The saints on the contrary, not only cannot long subsist if they neglect a conscientious discharge of these duties, but are inclined to practise them in a holy manner and from holy motives; it is the nature of true religion, to induce a scrupulous and constant attention to these various duties, especially such as belong to the closet, and such as relate to positive institutions: real Christians find their happiness in the performance of duty.

4. If we would know whether men are Christians, or mere pretenders to religion, we must inquire whether they are *assiduous* and *persevering* in the practice of piety. They, whose religion is false, may at times make a show of engagedness and zeal—when danger threatens, they may pray vehemently; when religion is popular, they may be amongst the foremost to countenance it; but let danger disappear and their praying will cease, let persecution arise and they will leave those to endure it who love religion for its own sake; they attend to the forms of religion, only when impelled by slavish fear, allured by deception, or incited by worldly interest. True religion on the contrary, affords a permanent foundation in the saints, and furnishes powerful motives for assiduous constancy in the discharge of the various duties of piety. Whether dangers are apprehended or not, whether religion is popular or otherwise, whether their worldly interests are promoted or retarded by it, whether it procure favor or reproach, the saints will be holy still. They embraced religion for reasons which can be little affected by such things as these; they counted the cost, and are not disappointed; they have gained by religion what they can never lose; they still find in it sufficient to render the happiness it confers, and the exercise of the duties it enjoins, their highest privilege and glory; they love religion now and choose "always to abound in the work of the Lord"; the ways of piety are to them the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; and they joyfully anticipate the entrance for which they are preparing to the world above, where they will be free from the obstructions by which they are here surrounded, and where religion will fully and eternally employ all their powers.

5. The humility and self-denial of men's hearts when

engaged in duty, is closely connected with their true character.

He who has Christian humility and self-denial, will exercise it, especially when he approaches the presence of Almighty God. It will occasion in him the most reverential apprehensions of the Divine Majesty, the deepest self-abasement, and most hearty renunciation of all dependence on himself or his doings, and entire reliance on the blessed Mediator for acceptance.

6. Another consideration by which men's hearts may be tried is, whether in the discharge of duty they have communion with God.

It is beyond contradiction, that unsanctified men never have communion with God, they never have what in scripture is so termed; and it is undeniable, that the saints do realize what is meant by this phrase, when they are engaged in the exercises of religion. This holy fellowship or communion, is founded in real union to the Lord Jesus Christ; it is enjoyed by those who have been brought nigh to God by reconciliation, and who draw near to him in duty; and if it cannot be adequately described to others, its reality, its present effects, and its blessedness are known to the people of God.

Let it be observed, that if some of these remarks, like such considerations as respect the spirituality of saints, and their growth in grace, are true of some in a higher degree than of others, yet their universal application is safe, and they are as definite as the case requires.

CHAPTER VIII.

Exhibiting the trials occasioned by sufferings on account of religion.

SECTION I.

We are come to the last class of trials, which was proposed for consideration; let us attend to it with seriousness and self-application. Thousands embark on the profession of religion in a calm, who, when the winds rise and the sea rages, and they see a storm gathering which threatens destruction, unless their carnal goods are thrown overboard, and their worldly expectations abandoned, forget the destined port, and desire to be landed, as soon as may be, upon the shore whence they departed. Thousands rank themselves with the company of the saints, who, when tribulation or persecution arise, turn back and herd again with their own kind.

But since every degree of suffering for religion's sake, is not sufficient to cause a separation of the vile from among the precious, I shall show what trials of this nature may be deemed sufficient; why such must necessarily discover who has false religion; and what advantages true holiness has to endure them.

SECTION II.

The following instances are selected, as being sufficiently severe to separate the dross from the gold.

1. When the dearest interests of men, which have relation to this world, their lives, liberties, or fortunes, are put to imminent hazard on account of religion, few, ex-

cept the genuine children of God, will maintain their steadfastness, and glory in the loss of all things else, rather than dishonor the name by which they are called, and incur the guilt of allowing any thing to have competition, in their regards, with the glory of God and their own eternal interests. In cases like this, false hearts will show themselves.

2. When there remain no hopes of deliverance from such trials, nor any visible encouragement that the scene will vary, then the hands of the false-hearted hang down, and their hearts faint.

3. When an unsanctified man is subjected to sufferings, alone, it is a thousand to one but he quits religion to save himself. Good company may encourage the irresolute and false-hearted, but they will faint and fail, if called to sustain the fight single-handed; they lack those inward and invisible supports, which uphold the saints in such circumstances.

4. When powerful temptations are combined with sufferings, with the desertion of friends and the opposition of relatives, then hypocrites and self-deceivers will leave religion and heaven, to be maintained and enjoyed by the saints.

SECTION III.

That these trials will distinguish true Christians from mere pretenders to religion, may be easily made evident.

1. During such trials, the predominant interest and attachment of men, will be made manifest. No man can serve two masters, whose injunctions clash with each other; he will, in ordinary times, secretly hold to the one, and despise the other; and when his obedience and fidelity are put to the proof, he will openly show whom

he serves. In these trials, the two great interests of men, this world and heaven, the flesh and Christ, stand opposed; one must be adhered to, the other abandoned. Christ saith, "Be thou faithful unto death; he that loveth father or mother, wife or children, lands or inheritance, bodily ease, temporal safety, or life itself, more than me, is not worthy of me:" The flesh saith, "Spare thyself; he that will grieve and break the hearts of these dear relatives, forsake these earthly accommodations, exchange ease for sufferings, and hazard life, is not worthy of them." Those, therefore, who love Christ supremely, will follow him wherever he leads, while the unholy will cleave to the world and the flesh.

2. When brought to suffer for the kingdom of heaven's sake, the saints derive their supports, not from any visible or sensible objects, which would be utterly insufficient, but from an invisible source, from their covenant God, their Saviour, their Sanctifier; which method of preservation the saints only have, and therefore they only can live through such trials.

3. In such times, men's notions and speculations about religion, their visionary hopes and self-comforting imaginations, vanish away, and those only who are rooted and grounded in the truth, will be likely to remain steadfast.

4. These trials reach the foundations of men's faith and hope, and will demolish such as are laid in the sand, while such only as are built upon the Rock of ages, will abide their vehemence and pressure.

SECTION IV.

I proceed to shew the advantagess of true holiness, when sufferings on account of religion are to be endured.

1. Holiness takes the throne, in the hearts of God's

people, and destroys the dominion of selfishness; supreme love to God predominates, and renders those interests which have the supreme regard of sinners, subordinate; and thus they love that for which they suffer, while their sufferings tend to subdue propensities and attachments to which they are opposed.

2. By true holiness, the affections of the saints are placed on heavenly and divine objects, they become heirs to an eternal and glorious inheritance, and are disposed to look, not at things which are seen and temporal, but at those which are unseen and eternal; hence they esteem the sufferings and tribulations with which they meet in the way to heaven, as light and unworthy to be compared with the end they have in view.

3. By holiness, man's will is brought into cordial subjection to the will of God, and, in the exercise of Christian submission, the saints can patiently endure whatever sufferings, trials, or privations are allotted to them.

4. Holiness has all good beings and all goodness on its side; it has the support of the Redeemer's intercession, the prayers of the saints, the assistances of the Holy Spirit, the promises of God's word: therefore, "neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor peril, nor sword," shall be able to separate the saints from the love of Christ, or terminate their obedience to him.

CHAPTER IX.

Exhibiting the ends for which God appoints such trials of the holiness of his people in this world.

SECTION I.

Some of the ways in which God brings the holiness of his people to the touchstone, in this world, have been mentioned and illustrated :—the design of these trials is now to be considered. Without doubt we may conclude, in general, that God designs to promote his own glory and the good of his people ; both of which will certainly be accomplished ; but for our improvement, a more particular exhibition of the ends answered by these events, is necessary.

SECTION II.

If we take a near view of this subject, we shall perceive many important benefits arising from these trials of the sincerity and holiness of God's people.

1. Hypocrisy is unmasked, the vizard is plucked from the false professor, and his real character is displayed to the world. Should any object, that this produces evil instead of good, that many are stumbled and hardened by it, and that the world observe its mischievous effects—I answer, that some are, indeed, thus prejudiced and rendered obdurate, so as never afterwards to think well of the government and people of God ; but who does not see, that his word and his purposes are thus accomplished ? and, if these stumble, and fall, and perish, yet others will be warned, awakened, and put to searching their hearts ; and hence good will arise ; " they who think they stand,

will take heed lest they fall." Again, by such disclosures of the corruption and danger of hypocrites and false professors, they, themselves, have better opportunities, and greater advantages than they ever had before, to escape from the snare of the devil. Their refuges of lies are swept away, their illusions and pretences are dissipated, and they are rendered more accessible to truth, and more open to the convictions of conscience.

2. By these trials, the uprightness of the saints is manifested, their doubts are resolved, and their fears allayed. What would not many Christians give, what would they not suffer, what would they not gladly perform, if they might attain satisfaction in these respects! How many tears have they shed in secret, how many hours have they spent in the examination of their hearts, without being able to accomplish their object? But they find, at last, that trials are the high-road to assurance; they have been cast into the furnace, and have come forth as gold purified in the fire; their holiness has been put to the test, and its reality demonstrated, not only to themselves, but to the world, who may now look upon the heavenly face of sincerity and truth, and see that true religion has the lustre and loveliness of immortal glory.

3. These trials are eminently calculated to subdue and destroy the remaining pride and self-confidence of the saints; who thus become more intimately acquainted with their hearts, and learn to detest what is evil, and to cherish what is good.

4. By trials, stupidity and slothfulness are prevented, and grace is kept in exercise. The best men are apt, unless often visited by some trial, to slacken in their diligence, and lose much of their fervor in religion.

5. When the graces of the saints are tried, Satan is put

o shame, and his malicious insinuations confuted. It is ıot uncommon for the devil and wicked men to charge the people of God with hypocrisy, and to persuade the world hat they are not what they pretend to be; these suggestions and calumnies are overthrown by such trials as have been considered.

6. These trials exhibit living testimony against the infidelity of the world; they demonstrate that religion is no fancy, as the thoughtless snd sensual would esteem it; that the engagedness of its professors is not blind bigotry and mistaken zeal; and that its doctrines and duties are not without efficacy, nor its effects destitute of high and lasting importance.

CHAPTER X.

Showing that such only is true holiness, as will bear these trials.

SECTION. I.

Before I confirm this truth, I will endeavor to prevent some mistakes, which a misapprehension of it might occasion.

1. We ought not to think because we are to be in a state of trial through life, and know not how we shall appear after future trials, that therefore assurance of our gracious state is unattainable; such a conclusion cannot be fairly drawn from the position which I am to confirm. Instead of indulging any such speculations, let Christians be grateful for the mercies which they have experienced hitherto, and trust in God for all the assistances of which they may hereafter stand in need.

2. Nor should it be imagined, that any saint has so much holiness as to be able, if left to himself, to sustain these trials, though no one will by any means be overcome by them. Saints are not distinguished, one from another, in this respect; all are, at all times, equally dependent on the gracious influences of the Spirit of God.

SECTION I.

I proceed to confirm the proposed truth, and to show, that such seeming grace as has never been tried, or will not bear trial, ought not to pass for genuine, as it will neither comfort men now, nor fit them for heaven at last.

1. All is not gold that glitters: great numbers of persons in the professing world are deceived and destroyed by trusting to apparent, but untried grace; they cannot determine that they have true holiness unless some trial be made of it, and if a trial be made which they cannot endure, the conclusion must be against them; hence they grope in uncertainty, and finally stumble where neither deliverance nor mitigation can reach them. Such was the miserable condition, and such, probably, was the fate of the Laodiceans mentioned in the text; they imagined themselves rich, but were, in truth, poor and wretched; their fancied gold had never been tried in the fire. Reader, pass not over this topic without some serious reflection, in regard to your own spiritual state.

2. The promises of salvation are made to such holiness, such religion, as will endure trial: "Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him."

Not to him who sets out in the morning with resolution and gallantry, but to him who holds out to the evening of

life, does the promise apply, "He that *endureth* to the end shall be saved." Hence if any who have sustained slight troubles, shall afterwards faint and fail under severe trials, all their labors and their hopes will prove vain.

3. Every man's character must be scrutinized at the final judgment; and if those who pretend to religion, cannot endure the trials to which they are now exposed, how can they bear the investigation to which they will then be subjected? Surely if we have not such holiness as will bear the severest tests to which it can be brought in this life, we can hardly hope that it will sustain the ordeal of the last day.

4. True holiness is willing to be tried; true saints greatly desire to know their condition, and choose to be searched and proved; but false religion strives to avoid the touchstone, and shrinks from scrutiny.

Saints wish to know the truth respecting themselves, whatever it may be, and however difficult of attainment; those who prefer that their supposed grace should be tried, are secretly conscious of its falseness, and of their insincerity. Reader, I know not your case, but if your heart is in any measure right in the sight of God, you will desire to know the worst of yourself; after making the most thorough trial of which you are capable, you will be disposed to submit to the scrutiny of HIM who cannot err: if such is not your case, you have but too much reason to class yourself among the rejected Laodiceans.

CHAPTER XI.

Containing various inferences from the subject, and some persuasions to self-examination.

SECTION I.

1. If what has been said relative to the trials of the holiness of the saints, is correct, then let none who hope for salvation, think to pass through this life in quietness, exempt from this searching experience. You may please yourselves with the ideal felicity of living at ease, but it is the delusion of hell, and if God loves you, he will in some way most certainly try and prove you; such has ever been the economy of his dealings with those whom he delights to honor, and who at last, being purified as gold, shall inherit his kingdom.

2. In view of what has been said, be guarded against too much confidence of your good estate: your period of trial has not expired; "you have not resisted unto blood striving against sin; be not high minded, but fear."

3. If true holiness must be tried in this world, as gold is tried in the fire, then it greatly concerns all men, at their setting out, to build upon the sure foundation, and to anticipate severe and repeated trials. If any have not done this, it behooves them to do it now. I warn you, reader, to count the cost before you attempt to build; to the test you must come, and by truth you must be judged; if you hope to *endure* to the end, you must have the spirit of a martyr.

4. It may be observed in view of this subject, that scandals and offences, in connection with religion, are unavoidable. "It must needs be that offences come," for,

all who are exposed to trials will not be able to bear them, some therefore will be offended; but the holy God will accomplish his ends, both in them that are saved and in them that perish.

On the whole, true saints have abundant reason to be encouraged; but hypocrites and self-deceivers may well be dismayed, for if they are not exposed in this life, they are sure to be hereafter.

SECTION II.

If men must be tried as gold is tried in the fire, then it is of great importance that they should examine and prove themselves, and it cannot be unsuitable to urge this duty here.

1. The difficulty of this work, ought to excite you specially and resolutely to undertake it; since your welfare requires that it should be performed. If it were an easy thing to ascertain the real state of the heart, you might more safely delay the investigation; but it has never been considered an easy task, and perhaps you, as well as others, may find a difficulty in two respects, in bringing your heart to the work, and in successfully conducting the examination; defer it not therefore, if you would attain well founded peace, and avoid final shame and perdition.

2. The discovery of sincerity and holiness, after a faithful examination, will abundantly reward you for your pains; I need not describe the value and the blessedness of such a discovery; the experience of it, alone, can be useful to you.

3. The vast interests of your souls in this mattter, ought to awaken you to the utmost diligence in examining yourselves. Your eternal happiness stands or falls

with your sincerity; bring your hearts then to the trial; your thoughts cannot be occupied on a more momentous subject; a portion of your time cannot be employed to better purpose; a business more worthy of your closest attention cannot be named.

4. Remember, that whether prepared or unprepared, whether saints or sinners, you must ere long stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and be approved or condemned. Therefore examine and prove yourselves now, and be willing that God should try you as he pleases in this world, that confusion and wo may not overwhelm you at last.

CHAPTER XII.

Proposing various helps for discovering sincerity and detecting hypocrisy.

SECTION I.

I shall venture here to offer some observations which may assist to the discovery of sincerity.

1. Every true reason of humiliation for sin is not a proper cause of doubt whether we have genuine holiness or not. It is the unhappiness and the sin of some good souls, to construe every thing unfavorably to themselves; they judge not candidly, and therefore cannot expect the comforts which piety confers on others.

2. The doubts and fears which we indulge concerning the unsoundness of our hearts, do not prove that we are destitute of holiness. Saints who are free from doubts and fears, are rarely to be met with.

3. Let him who would ascertain the state of his heart, examine it impartially, remembering, that for the smallest as well as for the greatest manifestations of sanctifying grace, God must be praised.

It may be of advantage to such, occasionally to propose to themselves questions like the following:

Do I seek the approbation of God, or the applause of men, in my religious exercises?

Is it the reproach and shame which attend sin at present or the misery which will follow it hereafter, or is it love to God and hatred of sin that restrains me from the commission of it?

Do I heartily rejoice to see God's work carried on in the world, and his glory promoted by the instrumentality of others, though the honor and the benefits of it result not to me?

Is there no duty so difficult or self-denying, but I desire to perform it when required?

Am I resolved to follow Christ, and practise holiness at all times and in all events?

Am I rigidly conscientious in abstaining from secret sins, and in performing secret duties?

Such questions proposed in a calm and serious hour, can hardly fail to reach the heart.

SECTION II.

As the upright and sincere are apt to apply to themselves the characteristics of hypocrites or self-deceivers, so these on the contrary, are eager to appropriate to themselves the graces and expectations of saints; some remarks must therefore be made to discover their ruinous mistakes.

1. It is not enough to clear a man from self-deception,

that he does not know himself to be deceived. Doubtless many are deceived, and will finally perish, who are not now sensible of their state, because they have never seriously examined it and ascertained the truth.

2. A man may be deceived himself, though he hates hypocrisy in another, and though he show great zeal in the cause of God; these, and similar dispositions may arise from different motives of the worst kind.

3. The reputation which a man's piety may have gained among Christians, will by no means prove that he does not deceive himself,—he may have a name to live while dead; nor will the respect which he may show to the servants of God avail, this may spring from selfish and unholy motives.

Let such persons press these, and similar questions, upon their consciences.

When I attempt to perform any duties towards God, do I engage my heart in them?

Am I not influenced by self-interest, worldly advantage, reputation, or ease, in my religious proceedings?

Have I not made such reserves as are inconsistent with the obligations of a Christian?

By what am I deterred from the commission of sin?

How is my conscience regarded in reference to secret sins and duties?

SECTION III.

I have only to add some advice, to such as may read this treatise.

1. Let it be your great object to have a holy heart, a renewed and right spirit. All the helps and directions in the world will not preserve you from delusion and ruin, unless your heart is sanctified.

2. Make religion the business of every day ; let it regulate all your conduct, and engross your affections. Consider well the motives of your actions ; maintain a constant watch over your propensities ; and especially when visited by sickness or trouble, give vigilant heed to the admonitions of conscience.

3. Away with all temporising in religion ; be an honest man, faithful to your Master and true to yourself; live not for this world, but for heaven ; keep your heart under the awe of God's presence, and hourly pray, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, O Lord, for I wait on thee."



ON THE

COMFORTS AND SNARES

OF

SOCIAL AND RELATIVE AFFECTIONS.

ALAS! how difficult do we find it to observe a due medium between overvaluing and undervaluing our creature comforts; especially those of social and relative life. The mutual affection which does, or should subsist, between husband and wife, parents and children, and proportionably between other family connections, or our intimate and tried friends, constitute our chief temporal pleasures. These are almost the only pleasures this earth can afford, which are very interesting to an intelligent and serious mind. For these the voluptuary has little relish; sensuality has blunted his feelings, and his gratifications are scarcely superior to those of the brutes.

Such persons are not at present concerned in the subject of this paper, nor can they well understand it. I write for those who possess and value the comforts of domestic life, acknowledge the goodness of the Lord in bestowing and preserving them, who wish to make them additional motives for gratitude and praise, but are often apprehensive that their attachments to his gifts withdraw their thoughts from the great Giver, and encroach upon that supreme regard which is only due to himself.

A disposition to love the creature more than the Creator, is undoubtedly a part and a proof of our natural depravity. This evil principle, described by the apostle under the names of the Flesh, the Old Man, and Indwelling Sin, however weakened and mortified in a true believer, is not extirpated. The opposition between nature and grace, flesh and spirit, renders the Christian's life a state of constant warfare. They are opposite, contrary, contradictory one to the other; no peace or truce can subsist between them. The effects of this conflict extend to every faculty: when grace is in exercise, the motions of sin are noticed, checked and lamented; but they are always sufficiently strong to render our best intentions and best actions defective and polluted; and particularly to depreciate and adulterate the finest feelings of humanity, and to turn our glory into shame. Thus our comforts often become our snares, and that which should be for our health proves an occasion of falling.

We cannot be too watchful against this propensity: it should prompt us to daily humiliation and much prayer. But the Lord is not a hard master; he gives us all things richly to enjoy; not to raise, and then disappoint our expectations, but, within the limits his wisdom prescribes, to gratify them. Ignorance and superstition misrepresent him. Under their influence, multitudes think to please him by self-invented austerities and mortifications, and suppose they shall be acceptable to him, in proportion as they make themselves miserable. But, on the contrary, we are assured that he delights in our prosperity, so far as it is consistent with our safety; and that he does not willingly afflict the children of men, and especially his own children, who love and serve him. He has placed *us in a* world, in which, (considered as his world) every

thing is beautiful in its season, proper use, and due subordination, to our good; though, considered as *man's* world, our apostacy has filled it with confusion and misery.

Contemplate his goodness in a rural situation. Light colors and prospects are suited to please the eye. The singing of birds, the lowing of the cattle, the bleating of the sheep, and, in general, the inarticulate tones of all the animal tribes, are soothing and grateful to the ear. During a great part of the year, the scent of blossoms and flowers perfumes the air, and regales the sense of smelling. Food is a necessary mean for the preservation of life, and would be so, if it were no less palatable than the most nauseous drugs. But we are furnished with a profusion and variety of articles, which, while they satisfy our hunger, and recruit our strength, are likewise grateful to the palate, and accommodated to the different tastes of different persons: nay, he has not only given us food, but fruits. These are certainly not needful for the support of life, nor are they interdicted, like the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but are freely presented for our use. Things might have been so constituted, that all our sensations from external objects would have been disagreeable and painful. But God is good. We should live in the midst of continual enjoyments, if we obeyed his precepts, and observed his regulations; which, however contrary to the evil dispositions of our fallen nature, amount to no more than the kind admonition, *Do thyself no harm;* for there is not a single restriction enjoined by the Scripture, with which it would not be our interest to comply, if the authority of God was wholly out of the question. But sin, where it prevails, dishonors God, abuses his gifts, and throws all into confusion. Intemperance, riot, and disorderly passions, have filled the earth with woe.

Thus, as we are creatures formed for society, and cannot live, either with safety or comfort, in a solitary state, it has pleased God, of his goodness, to make us susceptive of social affections, which sweeten our intercourse with each other, and combine duty with pleasure. Parents are certainly bound, by the law of nature, to take care of their own children, and to provide for them; especially in the helpless state of infancy, when they are utterly unable to take care of themselves. This would often be an irksome task, if they did not feel an instinctive tenderness for their infant offspring at first sight, which makes that delightful, which might otherwise be troublesome.

It is likewise the appointment of God, that the successive generations of mankind should be perpetuated by marriage. As this is the nearest of all natural relations, so, when the union is properly formed and conducted, it is the most interesting and endeared. This union, by the will of God, is in itself indissoluble till death makes a separation, excepting in the single case of unfaithfulness. But the marriage state, when entered into without a regard to God, to the rules of his word, and a dependance upon his blessing, is seldom productive of an abiding union of hearts: and if this be wanting, the case of either party may be compared to that of a dislocated limb, which is indeed still united to the body, but, not being in its proper place and connexion, is useless and painful itself, and the cause of pain and uneasiness to the whole body. Even the marriages of those who come together, and live together, in the fear of the Lord, are subject to heavy taxes: doubled in wedlock, and frequently multiplied in children, they have a larger share of cares, duties and anxieties, than those who live single; yet they are com-

paratively happy. And I think, all things considered, they have the most favored lot. They love the Lord, they seek his presence and blessing, and they do not seek in vain. They love each other, they have one faith, one aim, one hope. Their mutual affection, intimacy, and perfect confidence, greatly enhance the value and relish of the comforts in which they participate, and alleviate the weight of their burthens and trials. Love sweetens labor, and blunts the sting of sorrow. The vicissitudes of life give energy to prayer; and repeated supports and deliverances, in answer to prayer, afford new motives and causes for praise and thanksgiving.

But still they are jealous of themselves, lest those affectionate feelings, which greatly assist them in discharging their social and relative duties with attention and cheerfulness, should become excessive and idolatrous. And, as I have already observed, they have reason to be always upon their guard, lest that which is lawful and right in itself, should, by being indulged in an immoderate degree, become ensnaring and hurtful. A true believer is, for the most part, rather shocked than seduced by temptations to gross evils: his heart recoils at the proposal. He thinks, with Joseph, "How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" *Perimui in licitis*—His chief danger lies in the abuse of lawful things. The relation we stand in to God, as his intelligent creatures, from whom we derive all that we have or are, and on whom we depend for every breath we draw, makes it our indispensable duty to love him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. And as we have broken this law of our creation, he has in mercy been pleased to claim us for his own, by a new and more endearing title. He has bought us with a price, and paid his life as a ran-

som for our souls. When a sinner is enabled to feel the force of this argument, he needs no more: The love of Christ constrains him. From that moment, he is made willing to devote himself, and his all, to him who died for him. But the flesh striveth against the Spirit: he is still a poor creature. He cannot do the things that he would, nor as he would: otherwise every thought of his heart should be in absolute subjection to his Lord and Saviour.

The Lord who knows our frame, and whereof we are made, is unspeakably merciful to our infirmities, but he will not admit a rival. The believer knows and acknowledges, that whatever he possesses, which is not held and improved in subordination and subserviency to the will and glory of him from whom he received it, is so far an idol; and the consciousness of his proneness to afford these intruders an undue share of his affections, often makes him confess to the Lord with Job, "Behold, I am vile," though his outward conduct, in the sight of men, may be unblameable and exemplary.

Yet perhaps some persons may be overburdened with this apprehension. The Gospel is not designed to make us Stoics: it allows full room for those social feelings which are so necessary and beneficial in our present state, though it teaches and enjoins their due regulations. It is the duty, no less than the privilege of husbands, to love their wives, even as their ownselves, yea, even as Christ loved the church, who gave himself for it. These expressions are very strong; they imply great love, tenderness and sympathy. When the Lord said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest," he did not reprove him for loving his child; and Abraham's prompt obedience, when commanded to offer up his beloved son, was a proof that though his love

to Isaac was strong, it was not inordinate. And the apostle declares, "that if any man provide not for those of his own house (his kindred, his more distant relatives by blood or affinity,) he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." He is to provide for them, if in his power, in preference to others, which plainly intimates that they are preferably entitled to his love. Friendship, likewise, between those who are joint partakers of grace, is very consistent with true religion. Such was the frienship between David and Jonathan. And though our Lord loved all his disciples, one of them is honored with a peculiar distinction, as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

God formed us originally for himself, and endued the human mind with a capacity which he alone can fill. But when he dwells in the heart, there is still room for innumerable objects of complacence, in their proper subordinate order. When a woman marries, she may continue to love her own parents and relatives as formerly; she may extend her affection and regard to the parents and friends of her husband: in a course of years the number of those whom she loves and values may be greatly increased, without interfering with each other, or with what she owes to her husband; but there is a different and special regard due to him, which if she should transfer to another person, she would be criminal. Thus we may love, and we ought to love, our husbands, wives, children, parents, and friends; and if we consider them as the Lord's gifts—if we seek his blessing in them and upon them—if we hold them at his disposal—if we employ all our influence with them to engage them to seek and love him supremely—if, when they are removed from us, we are disposed to yield a cheerful submission to his holy will—and if, when these things are brought

into competition, we rather choose to venture displeasing our dearest friends, than to sin against the Lord—with these restrictions, we cannot easily love them too much.

But who can come up to this standard? I suppose no person can completely. But we may aim at it; we may lament our deficiency; we may pray for more grace; and by grace we may approximate more and more to it. It is not necessary to distress ourselves with what may happen: as, how should I behave, if the Lord were to take the desires of my eyes from me suddenly? We are to live to-day, and to leave to-morrow with him. If we presume that we could support such a stroke, we should probably find it too heavy for us. But this we *may* say, The Lord is all-sufficient, and he is faithful. He has promised strength according to the day. He permits me to call upon him in the time of trouble: and, I trust, when the time of trouble shall come, he will enable me to pray for that help from him, without which I know I must sink; for in myself I am weaker than a bruised reed. In the meantime, I endeavor to cast all my care upon him who careth for me.

For the rest, we are in the Lord's school—the school of the cross. His daily providential dispensations are suited to wean our attachment from every thing here, and to convince us that this cannot be our rest—it is polluted. Our roses grow on thorns, our honey wears a sting. Frequently our sharpest trials spring from our choicest comforts. Perhaps, while we are admiring our gourd, a worm is secretly preying upon its root. As every bitter thing is sweetened to a believer, so there is some bitter thing mingled with the sweet. This is wisely and mercifully ordered. It is necessary. And if things were not so bad *with us*, as in the language of sense they sometimes are,

they would probably be soon much worse. With such hearts as we have, and in such a world as we live in, much discipline is needful to keep us from sleeping upon the enchanted ground. But the time is short. It will not be thus always. We hope soon to be out of the reach of sin and temptation. Happy hour, when sorrow and mourning, hitherto our inseparable companions, shall flee away, to return no more! when joy and gladness shall come forth to meet us, and conduct us home! Then those who have loved each other in the Lord upon earth, shall rejoice together before him, shall drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand, and their happiness shall be unspeakable, uninterrupted, without abatement, and without end.

EXTRACT

FROM A LETTER

TO A FRIEND IN TROUBLE.

They who would always rejoice, must derive their joy from a source which is invariably the same; in other words, from Jesus. On that name! what a person, what an office, what a love, what a life, what a death, does it recal to our mind! Come, madam, let us leave *our* troubles to themselves for a while, and let us walk to Golgotha, and there take a view of his.

We stop, as we are going, at Gethsemane, for it is not a step out of the road. There he lies, bleeding though not wounded, it is by an invisible, an Almighty hand. Now I begin to see what sin has done. Now let me bring my sorrows, and compare, measure, and weigh them, against the sorrows of my Saviour! Foolish attempt! to weigh a mote against a mountain, against the universe! Thus far we have attained already, and aim to say,

Now let our pains be all forgot,
Our hearts no more repine!
Our suff'rings are not worth a thought,
When, Lord, compar'd with thine.

We are still more confirmed at our next station. Now we are at the foot of the cross. Behold the man! attend to his groans: contemplate his wounds. Now let us sit down here awhile, and weep for our crosses, if we can.

For our crosses! Nay, rather let us weep for our sins, which brought the Son of God into such distress. Agreed. I feel that we, not He, deserved to be crucified, and to be utterly forsaken. But this is not all: His death not only shews our desert, but seals our pardon. For a fuller proof, let us take another station. Now we are at his tomb. But the stone is rolled away. He is not here. He is risen. The debt is paid, and surety discharged. Not here! where then is He? Look up! Methinks the clouds part, and glory breaks through—Behold a throne! What a transition! He who hung upon the cross, is seated upon the throne! Hark! He speaks! May every word sink deep into your heart and mine! He says, "I know your sorrows, yea, I appoint them; they are tokens of my love; It is thus I call you by the honor of following me. See a place prepared for you near to myself! Fear none of these things: Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It is enough, Lord. Now then, let us compute, let us calculate again. These scales are the balances of the sanctuary. Let us put in our trials and griefs on one side. What an alteration! I thought them lately very heavy: now I find them light, the scale hardly turns with them. But how shall we manage to put in the weight on the other side? It is heavy indeed: an exceeding eternal weight of glory. It is beyond my grasp and power. No matter. Comparison is needless. I see with the glance of an eye, there is no proportion. I am content. I am satisfied. I am ashamed. Have I been so long mourning, and is this all the cause? Well, if the flesh will grieve, it shall grieve by itself. The Spirit, the Lord enabling me, shall rejoice, yea, it does. From this moment I wipe away my tears, and forbid them to flow; or, if I must weep, they shall be

tears of gratitude, love and joy! The bitter is sweet; the medicine is food. But the cloud closes. I can no longer see what I lately saw. However, *I have seen it.* I know it is there. He ever liveth, full of compassion and care, to plead for me above, to manage for me below. He is mine, and I am his: therefore all is well.

EXTRACTS

FROM A

TOKEN FOR MOURNERS.

[The concluding part.]

LUKE vii. 13.—And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said to her, Weep not.

THE lamentations and wailings of this distressed mother, moved the tender compassions of the Lord in beholding them, and stirred up more pity in his heart for her, than could be in her heart for her dear and only son.

Plea 1. You press me, by many great considerations to meekness, and quiet submission under this heavy stroke of God; but you little know what stings my soul feels now in it.

This child was a child of many prayers, it was a Samuel begged of the Lord, and I concluded, when I had it, that it brought with it the returns and answers of many prayers. But now I see it was nothing less; God had no regard to my prayer about it, nor was it given me in that special way of mercy, as I imagined it to be: My child is not only dead, but my prayers in the same day shut out and denied.

Answer 1. That you prayed for your children before you had them, was your duty; and if you prayed not for

them submissively, referring it to the pleasure of God to give, or deny them, to continue, or remove them, as should seem good to him, that was your sin: You ought not to limit the Holy One of Israel, nor prescribe to him, or capitulate with him, for what term you shall enjoy your outward comforts: If you did so, it was your evil, and God hath justly rebuked it by this stroke. If you did pray conditionally, and submissively referring both the mercy asked, and continuance of it to the will of God, as you ought to do; then there is nothing in the death of your child that crosses the true scope and intent of your prayer.

Ans. 2. Your prayers may be answered, though the thing prayed for be withheld, yea, or though it should be given for a little while, and snatched away from you again. There are four ways of God's answering prayers; by giving things prayed for presently, or by suspending the answer for a time, and giving afterwards, or by withholding from you that mercy which you ask, and giving you a much better mercy in the room of it. Or, lastly, by giving you patience to bear the loss or want of it.

Now, if the Lord have taken away your child, or friend, and in lieu thereof given you a meek, quiet, submissive heart to his will, you need not say he hath shut out your cry.

Plea 2. But I have lost a lovely, obliging, and most endearing child, one that was beautiful and sweet; it is a stony heart that would not dissolve into tears for the loss of one so desirable, so engaging as this was: Ah! it is no common loss.

Ans. 1. The more lovely, and engaging, your relation was, the more excellent will your patience, and contentment with the will of God, in its death, be; the more

loveliness, the more self-denial, the more grace. Had it been a thousand times more endearingly sweet than it was, it was not too good to deny for God. If therefore obedience to the will of God do indeed master natural affections, and that you look upon patience and contentment as much more beautiful than the sweetest and most desirable enjoyment on earth, it may turn to you for a testimony of the truth and strength of grace: that you can, like Abraham, part with a child whom you so dearly love in obedience to the will of your God, whom you love infinitely more.

Ans. 2. The loveliness and beauty of our children and relations, though it must be acknowledged a good gift from the hand of God; yet it is but a common gift, and oftentimes becomes a snare, and is, in its own nature, but a transitory, vanishing thing, and therefore no such great aggravation of the loss as is pretended.

I say, it is but a common gift; Eliab, Adonijah, and Absalom, had as lovely presences as any in their generation. Yea, it is not only common to the wicked, with the godly, but to brute animals, as well as men, and to most that excel in it, it becomes a temptation; the souls of some had been more beautiful and lovely, if their bodies had been less so. Besides, it is but a flower which nourishes in its month, and then fades. This therefore should not be reflected on as so great a circumstance to aggravate your trouble.

Ans. 3. But if your relation sleep in Jesus, he will appear ten thousand times more lovely in the morning of the resurrection, than ever he was in the world. What is the exactest, purest beauty of mortals, to the incomparable beauty of the saints in the resurrection? "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom

of their Father," Matth. xiii. 43. in this hope you part with them, therefore act suitably to your hopes.

Plea 3. Oh! but my child was nipped off by death in the very bud; I did but see, and love and part: Had I enjoyed it longer, and had time to suck out the sweetness of such an enjoyment, I could have borne it easier; but its months or years with me were so few, that they only served to raise an expectation which was quickly, and therefore the more sadly disappointed.

Ans. 1. Did your friend die young, or was the bond of any other relation dissolved almost as soon as made? Let not this seem so intolerate a load for you; for if you have ground to hope they died in Christ, then they lived long enough in this world. It is truly said, he hath sailed long enough, that hath won the harbor; he hath fought long enough that hath obtained the victory; he hath run long enough that hath touched the goal; and he hath lived long enough upon earth, that hath won heaven, be his days here never so few.

Ans. 2. The sooner your relation died, the less sin hath been committed, and the less sorrow felt: What can you see in this word but sin or sorrow? A quick passage through it to glory, is a special privilege. Surely the world is not so desirable a place, that Christians should desire an hour's time longer in it for themselves, or theirs, than serves to fit them for a better.

Ans. 3. And whereas you imagine the parting would have been easier, if the enjoyment had been longer, it is a fond and groundless suspicion: The longer you had enjoyed them, the stronger would the endearments have been. A young and tender plant, may be easily drawn up by a single hand; but when it hath spread, and fixed its root many years in the earth, it will require many a

strong blow, and hard tug to root it up. Affections, like those under ground roots, are fixed and strengthened by nothing more than constant and long possession: it is much easier parting now, than it would be hereafter, whatever you think. However, this should satisfy you, that God's time is the best time.

Plea 4. O but I have lost all in one, it is my only one, I have none left in its room to repair the breach, and make up the loss: If God had given me other children to take comfort in, the loss had not been so great; but to lose all at one stroke, is insupportable.

Ans. 1. Religion allows not unto Christians a liberty of expressing the death of their dear relations by so hard a word as the loss of them is; they are not lost, but sent before you. And it is a shameful thing for a Christian to be reproved for such an uncomely expression by a heathen; it is enough to make us blush to read what a heathen said in this case, 'Never say thou hast lost any thing (saith Epictetus) but that it is returned. Is thy son dead? He is only restored. Is thy inheritance taken from thee! it is also returned.' And a while after he adds, 'Let every thing be as the gods would have it.'

Ans. 2. It is no fit expression to say you have lost all in one, except that one be Christ; and he being once yours, can never be lost. Doubtless your meaning is, you have lost all your comfort of that kind; and what though you have? Are there not multitudes of comforts yet remaining, of a higher kind, and more precious and durable nature?

Ans. 3. You too much imitate the way of the world in this complaint; they know not how to repair the loss of one comfort but by another of the same nature, which must be put in its room to fill up the vacancy: But have

you no other way to supply your loss? Have you not a God to fill the place of any creature that leaves you? Surely this would better become a man whose portion is in this life, than one that professes God is his all in all.

Plea 5. O but my only one is not only taken away, but there remains no expectation, or probability of any more. I must now look upon myself as a dry tree, never to take comfort in children any more, which is a cutting thought.

Ans. 1. Suppose what you say, that you have no hope, nor expectation of another child remaining to you; yet if you have a hope of better things than children, you have no reason to be cast down: Bless God for higher and better hopes than these. The Lord comforts them that have no expectations of sons or daughters, with this; "That he will give unto them in his house, and within his wall, a place, and a name better than of sons or daughters; even an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." There are better mercies and higher hopes than these; though your hopes of children, or from children, should be cut off, yet if your eternal hopes are secure, and such as shall not make you ashamed, you should not be so cast down.

Ans. 2. If God will not have your comforts to lie any more in children, then resolve to place them in himself, and you shall never find cause to complain of loss by such an exchange: You will find that in God, which is not to be had in the creature; one hour's communion with him, shall give you that which the happiest parent never yet had from his children; you will exchange brass for gold, perishing vanity for solid and abiding excellency.

Plea 6. But the suddenness of the stroke is amazing, God gave little or no warning to prepare for this trial: Death executed its commission as soon as it opened it. My dear husband, wife, or child, was snatched unex-

pectedly out of my arms, by a surprising stroke; and this makes my stroke heavier than my complaint.

Ans. 1. That the death of your relation was so sudden and surprising, was much your own fault, you ought to have lived in the daily sense of its vanity, and expectation of your separation from it; you knew it to be a dying comfort in its best estate, and it is no such wonderful thing to see that dead, which you knew before to be dying: Besides, you heard the changes ringing about you in other families; you frequently saw other parents, husbands, and wives carrying forth their dead; and what were all these but warnings given you to prepare for the like trials?

Ans. 2. There is much difference betwixt the sudden deaths of infants, and that of grown persons; the latter may have much work to do; many sins actually to repent of, and many evidences of their interest in Christ to examine and clear, in order to their more comfortable death; and so sudden death may be deprecated by them.

But in the case of infants, who exercise not their reason, it is far different; they have no such work to do, but are purely passive: All that is done in order to their salvation, is done by God immediately upon them, so it comes all to one, whether their death be more quick, or more slow.

Ans. 3. You complain of the suddenness of the stroke; but another will be ready to say, had my friend died in that manner, my affliction had been nothing to what now it is; I have seen many deaths contrived into one; I saw the gradual approaches of it upon my dear relation, who felt every thread of death as it came on towards him.

That which you reckon the sting of your affliction, others would have reckoned a favor and privilege. How many tender parents, and other relations, who loved their friends as dearly as yourselves, have been forced to their

knees, upon no other errand but this, to beg the Lord to hasten the separation, and put an end to that sorrow, which to them was much greater than the sorrow for the dead.

Plea 7. You press me to moderation of sorrows, and I know I ought to shew it; but you do not know how the case stands with me, there is a sting in this affliction, that none feels but myself; and, O! how intolerable is it now! I neglected proper means in season to preserve life, or miscarried in the use of means. I now see such a neglect, or such a mistake about the means, as I cannot but judge greatly to contribute to that sad loss which I now, too late, lament.

Ans. 1. Though it be an evil to neglect and slight the means ordained by God for recovery of health, yet it is no less evil to ascribe too much to them, or rely too much on them: the best means in the world are weak and ineffectual, without God's assistance and concurrence, and they never have that of his assistance or concurrence, when his time is come; and that it was fully come in your friend's case, is manifested now by the event. So that if your friend had had the most excellent helps the world affords, they would have availed nothing. This consideration takes place only in your case, who see what the will of God is by the issue, and may not be pleaded by any whilst its remains dubious and uncertain, as it generally doth in time of sickness.

Ans. 2. To conclude, Times of great affliction are ordinarily times of great temptation, and it is usual with Satan then to charge us with more sins than we are guilty of, and also make those things to be sins, which, upon impartial examination, will not be found to be so.

Indeed, had your neglect or miscarriage been known or voluntary, or had you really preferred a little money

(being able to give it) before the life of your relation, and did deliberately choose to hazard this, rather than part with that; no doubt then, but there had been much evil or sin mixed with your affliction; and your conscience may justly smite you for it, as your sin; but in the other case, which is more common, and I presume yours; It is a false charge, and you ought not to abet the design of Satan in it.

Plea 8. But my troubles are upon a higher score, and account; my child or friend is passed into eternity, and I know not how it is with his soul: were I sure my relation were with Christ, I should be quiet; but my fears of the contrary are overwhelming; O it is terrible to think of the damnation of one so dear to me.

Ans. 1. Admit what the objection supposes, that you have real grounds to fear the eternal condition of your dear relation; yet it is utterly unbeseeming you, even in such a case as this, to dispute with, or repine against the Lord.

I do confess it is a sore and heavy trial, and that there is no cause more sad and sinking to the spirit of a gracious person: their death is but a trifle to this; but yet if you be such as fear the Lord, methinks his indisputable sovereignty over them, and his distinguishing love and mercy to you, should at least silence you in this matter.

First, His indisputable sovereignty over them, "Who art thou, O man, who disputest with God?" He speaks in the matters of eternal election and reprobation. What if the Lord will not be gracious to those that are so dear to us? Is there any wrong done to them or us thereby? Aaron's two sons were cut off in the act of sin, by the Lord's immediate hand, and yet he held his peace. God told Abraham plainly, that the covenant should not be estab-

lished with Ishmael. for whom he so earnestly prayed, *O let Ishmael live before thee!* and he knew that there was no salvation out of the covenant, and yet he sits down silent under the word of the Lord.

Secondly, But if this do not quiet you, yet methinks his distinguishing love and mercy to you should do it. O what do you owe to God, that root and branch had not been cast together into the fire! that the Lord hath given you good hope, through grace, that it shall be well with you for ever. Let this stop your mouth, and quiet your spirit, though you would have grounds for this fear.

Answer 2. But pray examine the grounds of your fear, whether it may not proceed from the strength of your affections to the eternal welfare of your friend, or from the subtlety of Satan, designing hereby to overwhelm and swallow you up in supposed, as well as from just grounds and causes? In two cases it is very probable your fear may proceed only from your own affection, or Satan's temptation.

First, If your relation died young, before it did any thing to destroy your hopes. Or,

Secondly, If grown, and in some good degree hopeful; only he did not in life, or at death, manifest, and give evidence of grace, with that clearness as you desired.

As to the case of infants in general, it is none of our concern to judge their condition; and as for those that sprang from covenanted parents, it becomes us to exercise charity towards them; the scripture speaks very favorably of them.

And as for the more adult, who have escaped the pollutions of the world, and made conscience of sin and duty, albeit they never manifested what you could desire they had; yet in them, as in young Abijah, "may be found

some good things towards the Lord," which you never took notice of. Reverence of your authority, bashfulness and shame-facedness, reservedness of disposition, and many other things, may hide those small and weak beginnings of grace that are in children, from the observations of the parents. God might see that in them that you never saw: he despiseth not the day of small things.

However it be, it is now out of your reach; your concernment rather is to improve the affliction to your own good, than judge and determine their condition, which belongs not to you, but to God.

Plea 9. O but I have sinned in this relation, and God hath punished my sin in dissolving it. O, saith one, my heart was set too much upon it, I even idolized it, that was my sin: and, saith another, I wanted due affections, and did not love my relation, at least not so spiritually as I ought; that was my sin. Now God is visiting me for all the neglects and defects that have been in me towards my relation.

Answer 1. There is no man so thoroughly sanctified, as not to fail, and come short in many things pertaining to his relative duties: and to speak, as the thing is, the corruptions of the holiest persons are as much discovered in this, as any other thing whatsoever; and it is a very common thing for conscience, not only to charge these failures upon us, but to aggravate them to the utmost, when God hath made the separation, So that this is no more than what is usual, and very common, with persons in your case.

Answer 2. Admit that which the objection supposes, that God hath afflicted you for your sin, and removed that comfort from you, which you idolized, and too much doted on; yet there is no reason you should be so cast

down under your affliction: For all this may be, and probably is the fruit of his love to, and care of your soul. He tells the afflicted, for their comfort, "Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten." How much better is it to have an idolized enjoyment taken from you, in mercy, than if God should say concerning you, as he did of Ephraim, "He is joined to idols, let him alone."

Plea 10. God hath blessed me with an estate, and outward comforts in the world, which I reckoned to have left to my posterity; and now I have none to leave it with, nor have I any comfort to think of it; the purposes of my heart are broken off, and the comfort of all my other enjoyments blasted by this stroke in an hour. How are the pains and cares of many years perished.

Answer 1. How many are there in the world, yea, of our own acquaintance, whom God hath either denied, or deprived both of the comforts of children and estates too? If he have left you those outward comforts, you ought to acknowledge his goodness therein, and not to slight these because he hath dprived you of the other.

Answer 2. Though your children are gone, yet God hath many children left in the world, whose bowels you may refresh with what he hath bestowed upon you; and your charity to them will doubtless turn to a more considerable account, than if you had left a large estate to your own posterity.

Surely we are not sent into this world to heap up great estates for our children: and if you have been too eager in this design, you may now read God's just rebuke of your folly.

Plea 11. O but the remembrance of its witty words and pretty actions, is wounding.

Answer. Let it rather lift up your hearts to God in

e, that gave you so desirable a child, than fill your
: with discontent at his hand in removing it. How
r parents are there in the world, whose children
hath deprived of reason and understanding, so that
only differ from the beasts in external shape and
e ? And how many shew betimes so perverse a tem-
that little comfort can be expected from them.

ea 12. *Lastly*, It is objected, O but God hides his
from me in my affliction ; it is dark within, as well as
ut, and this makes my case more deplorable, greatly
ed, and sadly deserted.

swer 1. Though you want at present sensible com-
yet you have reason to be thankful for gracious sup-
. Though the light of God's countenance shine not
you, yet you find the everlasting arms are under-
you ; the care of God worketh for you, when the
lations of God are withdrawn from you.

swer 2. To have God hide his face in time of trouble,
new, or unusual thing. If Christ cry in extremity,
God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me !" Then
we need not wonder, as if some strange thing had
ened to us.

d thus I have satisfied the most considerable pleas
l, in justification of our excesses.

ow come to the means of curing and preventing
sinful excesses of sorrow for the death of our dear
ons, which I shall do, by prescribing the following
:

le 1. *If you would not mourn excessively for the loss
ature comforts, then beware that you set not your de,
nd love excessively, or inordinately upon them, whilst
o enjoy them.*

ong affections make strong afflictions ; the higher the

tide, the lower the ebb. According to the mea
our delight in the enjoyment, is our grief in the
these things. The apostle knits these two grace
perance and patience, together, in the precept, a
very observable how intemperance and impatien
inseparably linked in experience, yea, the experi
the best men. "Now Israel loved Joseph more t
his children, because he was the son of his old ag
made him a coat of many colors."

This was the darling; Jacob's heart was so exc
ly set upon him, his very life was bound up in the
the lad. Now when the supposed death of his ch
brought to him, how did he carry it? "And Jac
his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins; and
ed for his son many days: And all his sons, and
daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refuse
comforted. And he said, for I will go down into the
to my son mourning. Thus his father wept for hi

Here, as in a glass, are the effects of excessive l
a child represented: Here you may see what wo
moderate love will make, even in a sanctified hea

Rule 2. *If you would not be overwhelmed with g
the loss of your relations, be exact and careful in di
ing your duties to them while you have them.*

The testimony of your conscience, that you h
bored in all things to discharge the duties you o
your relations, whilst they were with you, will p
excellent allay to your sorrows for them when t
no longer yours. It is not so much the single affli
the guilt charged upon us in times of affliction, tha
our load so heavy.

Rule 3. *If you would not be overwhelmed by tro
the loss of your dear relation, then turn to God and*

ble, and pour out your sorrows, by prayer, into his m.

'his will ease and allay your troubles. Blessed be l for the ordinance of prayer; how much are all the its beholden to it, at all times, but especially in heart- ing and distressful times? I told you before of that y man, who, having lost his dear and only son, got to closet, there poured out his soul freely to the Lord, when he came down to his friends, that were waiting ow to comfort him, and fearing how he would bear ; stroke, he came from his duty with a cheerful coun- nce, telling them he would be content to bury a son, : were possible, every day, provided he might enjoy h comfort as his soul had found in that private hour. hy way, Christian, to thy God, get thee to thy knees he cloudy and dark day.

ule 4. *If you would bear the loss of your dear relations moderation, eye God in the whole process of the afflic- more, and secondary causes and circumstances of the ter less.*

irst, As a sovereign hand, which hath right to dispose hee, and all thy comforts, without thy leave or con- t.

econdly, As a father's hand, correcting thee in love faithfulness. "Whom the Lord loveth, he correct- , as a father the son in whom he delighteth." O if e you could but see affliction as a rod in a father's d, proceeding from his love, and intended for your rnal good; how quiet would you then be?

Thirdly, As a just and righteous hand. Hast not thou ocured this to thyself by thy own folly? Yea, the rd is just in all that is come upon thee; whatever he h done, yet he hath done thee no wrong.

Rule 5. *If you would bear your affliction with mod tion, compare it with the afflictions of other men, and will greatly ... et your spirits.*

You have no cause to say God hath dealt bitterly you, and that there is no sorrow like your sorrow: I round about you, and impartially consider the cond that others are in; and they nothing inferior to yo any respect. You had but one dead child; Aaron two at a stroke, Job all at one stroke; and both thes an immediate stroke from the hand of God.

Rule 6. *Carefully shun and avoid whatsoever ma new your sorrow, or provoke you to impatience.*

I told you before, why Jacob would not have the of which Rachel died, called after the name his wife given, Benoni, the son of my sorrow; lest it should p a daily occasion of renewing his trouble for the loss o dear wife: But he called his name Benjamin.

Your impatience is like tinder, or gun-powder, so l you can prevent the sparks from falling on it, there i great danger; but you that carry such dangerous pre ed matter in your own hearts, cannot be too careful prevent them.

Rule 7. *In the day of your mourning for the dea your friends, seriously consider your own death as proaching, and that you and your dead friend are as guished by a small interval and point of time.* "I sha to him." Surely the thoughts of your own death, a proaching also, will greatly allay your sorrows for dead that are gone before you. Would you realize own deaths more, you would not be so deeply conce for their death as you are.

THE END.



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